

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Northern States Power Company :
2013 Electric Rate Increase : Case No. PU-12-813
Application :

TRANSCRIPT OF

HEARING

VOLUME I

Taken At
State Capitol
Bismarck, North Dakota
August 27, 28 & 29, 2013

BEFORE THE HON. BONNY M. FETCH
-- ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE --

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A P P E A R A N C E S

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

COMMISSIONER BRIAN P. KALK, Chairman
COMMISSIONER JULIE FEDORCHAK
COMMISSIONER RANDY CHRISTMANN

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- and -

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AS COMMISSION ADVISER.

C O N T E N T S

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

Page No.

NSP WITNESSES:

LAURA McCARTEN

Direct examination by Ms. Valley	39
Cross-examination by Mr. Norrell	45
Cross-examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	88
Examination by Commissioner Fedorchak	100
Examination by Commissioner Kalk	119
Examination by Commissioner Christmann	129
Redirect Examination by Ms. Valley	141
Recross-examination by Mr. Norrell	145
Examination by Commissioner Kalk	150

STEPHEN FOSS

Direct examination by Ms. Valley	156
Cross-examination by Mr. Norrell	159
Examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	161
Examination by Commissioner Fedorchak	163
Examination by Commissioner Kalk	166
Further Examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	171

TIMOTHY J. O'CONNOR

Direct examination by Ms. Valley	173
Cross-examination by Mr. Norrell	177
Examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	187
Examination by Commissioner Fedorchak	189
Examination by Commissioner Kalk	197
Examination by Commissioner Christmann	202
Further Examination by Commissioner Kalk	203
Examination by Judge Fetch	204

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

C O N T E N T S (Continued)

SHARON KOENIG

Direct examination by Ms. Valley	209
Cross-examination by Mr. Norrell	213
Examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	231
Examination by Commissioner Fedorchak	243
Examination by Commissioner Kalk	249
Examination by Commissioner Christmann	256
Recross-examination by Mr. Norrell	257
Further Examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	261
Further Examination by Commissioner Fedorchak	262

LISA PERKETT

Direct examination by Mr. Johnson	266
Cross-examination by Mr. Norrell	271
Examination by Commissioner Fedorchak	288
Examination by Commissioner Kalk	292
Examination by Commissioner Christmann	296
Redirect Examination by Mr. Johnson	304

SCOTT BROCKETT

Direct examination by Mr. Johnson	307
Cross-examination by Mr. Norrell	312
Cross-examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	337
Examination by Commissioner Fedorchak	348
Examination by Commissioner Kalk	360
Examination by Commissioner Christmann	366
Redirect examination by Mr. Johnson	373
Recross-examination by Mr. Norrell	377
Recross-examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	378
Further Examination by Commissioner Fedorchak	380
Further Examination by Commissioner Kalk	382

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

C O N T E N T S (Continued)

ANN BULKLEY

Direct examination by Mr. Johnson	390
Cross-examination by Mr. Norrell	394
Cross-examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	425
Examination by Commissioner Fedorchak	429
Examination by Commissioner Kalk	443
Examination by Commissioner Christmann	450
Redirect examination by Mr. Johnson	455
Recross-examination by Mr. Norrell	464
Recross-examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	465
Further Examination by Commissioner Fedorchak	466
Further Examination by Commissioner Christmann	468
Redirect Examination by Mr. Johnson	469

STEVE WISHART

Direct examination by Ms. Valley	472
Cross-examination by Mr. Norrell	477
Examination by Commissioner Fedorchak	498
Examination by Commissioner Kalk	506
Examination by Commissioner Christmann	514
Redirect examination by Ms. Valley	519
Recross-examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	522
Further Examination by Commissioner Kalk	528

ANNE HEUER

Direct examination by Mr. Johnson	534
Cross-examination by Mr. Norrell	540
Cross-examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	552
Examination by Commissioner Fedorchak	557
Examination by Commissioner Kalk	564
Examination by Commissioner Christmann	575
Redirect examination by Mr. Johnson	576
Recross-examination by Mr. Norrell	578
Recross-examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	580

1	C O N T E N T S (Continued)	
2	MICHAEL PEPPIN	
3	Direct examination by Ms. Valley	587
4	Cross-examination by Mr. Norrell	590
5	Cross-examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	591
6	STEVEN HUSO	
7	Direct examination by Ms. Valley	596
8	Cross-examination by Mr. Norrell	599
9	Cross-examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	601
10	Examination by Commissioner Kalk	604
11	Examination by Commissioner Christmann	606
12	ANNE HEUER	
13	Further Examination by Commissioner Kalk	609
14	Further Examination by Commissioner Fedorchak	612
15	Further Examination by Commissioner Christmann	615
16	Recross-examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	616
17	GEORGE E. TYSON II	
18	Direct examination by Mr. Johnson	621
19	Examination by Commissioner Fedorchak	623
20	Examination by Commissioner Kalk	627
21	Examination by Commissioner Christmann	630
22	Cross-examination by Mr. Norrell	632
23	ADVOCACY STAFF WITNESSES:	
24	MICHAEL MAJOROS, JR.	
25	Direct examination by Mr. Norrell	641
26	Cross-examination by Mr. Johnson	647
27	Examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	662
28	Examination by Commissioner Fedorchak	663
29	Examination by Commissioner Kalk	668
30	Examination by Commissioner Christmann	672
31	Further Examination by Commissioner Fedorchak	676

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

C O N T E N T S (Continued)

MICHAEL MAJOROS, JR.

Examination by Judge Fetch	678
Redirect Examination by Mr. Norrell	679
Further Examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	681
Recross-examination by Mr. Johnson	684
Further Examination by Commissioner Christmann	686
Further Examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	687

CHARLES KING

Direct examination by Mr. Norrell	691
Cross-examination by Mr. Johnson	697
Examination by Commissioner Fedorchak	708
Examination by Commissioner Kalk	716
Examination by Commissioner Christmann	723
Examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	727
Redirect examination by Mr. Norrell	731
Recross-examination by Mr. Johnson	735
Examination by Commissioner Fedorchak	742
Further Examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	745

RICHARD PAVLOVIC

Direct examination by Mr. Norrell	749
Cross-examination by Mr. Johnson	755
Examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	759
Examination by Commissioner Fedorchak	762
Examination by Commissioner Kalk	768
Examination by Commissioner Christmann	769
Recross-examination by Mr. Johnson	774
Further Examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	778
Redirect Examination by Mr. Norrell	781
Further Examination by Commissioner Christmann	782

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

C O N T E N T S (Continued)

DANTE MUGRACE

Direct examination by Mr. Norrell	784
Cross-examination by Ms. Valley	790
Examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	806
Examination by Commissioner Fedorchak	810
Examination by Commissioner Kalk	816
Examination by Commissioner Christmann	821
Redirect Examination by Mr. Norrell	822
Recross-examination by Ms. Valley	823

SARA CARDWELL

Direct examination by Mr. Norrell	828
Cross-examination by Ms. Valley	830
Examination by Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco	833
Examination by Commissioner Fedorchak	835
Examination by Commissioner Kalk	839

1	C O N T E N T S (Continued)		
2	NSP EXHIBITS:		
3	No.	Description	Received
4	1	Cover Letter, Index, Rate	
5		Petition, Deficiency and	
6		Proposed Revenue Schedules,	
7		Interim Petition and Schedules	25
8	2	Interim Rate Tariffs (legislative	
9		and nonlegislative)	25
10	3	Tariff Summary and Proposed	
11		Tariffs (legislative and	
12		(nonlegislative)	25
13	4	Revenue Analysis Workpapers	25
14	5	Direct testimony of Laura	
15		McCarten - Public	25
16	6	Rebuttal testimony of Laura	
17		McCarten - Public	25
18	7	Direct testimony of Stephen Foss -	
19		Public	25
20	8	Direct testimony of Timothy	
21		O'Connor - Public	25
22	9A	Rebuttal testimony of Timothy	
23		O'Connor - Public	25
24	9B	Rebuttal testimony of Timothy	
25		O'Connor - Nonpublic	25
26	10A	Rebuttal testimony of Sharon	
27		Koenig - Public	25
28	10B	Rebuttal testimony of Sharon	
29		Koenig - Nonpublic	25
30	11	Direct testimony of Lisa	
31		Perkett - Public	25
32	12	Rebuttal testimony of Lisa	
33		Perkett - Public	25

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
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11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
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23
24
25

C O N T E N T S (Continued)

No.	Description	Received
13	Rebuttal testimony of Scott Brockett - Public	25
14	Direct testimony of Ann Bulkley - Public	25
15	Rebuttal testimony of Ann Bulkley - Public	25
16A	Supplemental Direct testimony of Steven Wishart - Public	25
16B	Supplemental Direct testimony of Steven Wishart - Nonpublic	25
17	Rebuttal testimony of Steven Wishart - Public	25
18	Direct testimony of Anne Heuer - Public	25
19	Rebuttal testimony of Anne Heuer - Public	25
20	Direct testimony of Michael Peppin - Public	25
21	Direct testimony of Steven Huso - Public	25
22	Rebuttal testimony of Steven Huso - Public	25
23	Opening Statement of Laura McCarten	45
24	Opening Statement of Stephen Foss	156
25	Opening Statement of Timothy O'Connor	173
26	Opening Statement of Sharon Koenig	209
27	Opening Statement of Lisa Perkett	265

C O N T E N T S (Continued)		
No.	Description	Received
28	Opening Statement of Scott Brockett	307
29	Opening Statement of Ann Bulkley	394
30	Opening Statement of Steve Wishart	474
31	Opening Statement of Anne E. Heuer	534
32	Opening Statement of Michael A. Peppin	587
33	Opening Statement of Steven Huso	596
34	Form 10-K Northern States Power Company	657
35	Treasury Yield 30 Years Index Chart	701
36	FRED Graph	704
37	Supplement to Data Request No. NDPSC-1-004	826
38	NSP List of corrections	845
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION EXHIBITS		
1	Direct testimony and exhibits of Michael J. Majoros, Jr.	26
2	Supplemental testimony and exhibits of Michael Majoros, Jr.	26
3	Direct testimony and exhibits of Charles W. King	26
4	Revised Direct testimony and exhibits of Dante Mugarce	26
5	Direct testimony and exhibits of Karl Richard Pavlovic	26

1	C O N T E N T S (Continued)		
2	No.	Description	Received
3	LATE-FILED EXHIBITS:		
4	A	Date and Order Number when 12 CP jurisdictional allocation was approved	93
5			
6	B	Pending ADP Applications and Costs Raised Not in Base Rates	474
7			
8	C	Listing of charitable contributions	134
9			
10	D	IntelliTeam switch potential in Grand Forks and Minot	170
11			
12	E	Savings in the form of reduced compensation and a reduction in benefits cost	230
13			
14	F	JP Morgan article dated 8-20-2013	405
15			
16	G	Orders from State of New York	423
17			
18	H	End of Year 2012 Utility Plant in Service	545
19			
20	I	Monthly total sales by customer class for North Dakota for 2013	547
21			
22	J	Updated monthly billed, net unbilled and calendar interim rates for April and May	551
23			
24	K	List of management and salary allocation	573
25			
26	L	Document re lobbying expense	573
27			
28	M	Expected return of pension and Pension funding	585
29			
30	N	Response to Commissioner Fedorchak's question regarding capital structures	848
31			
32			

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
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10
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12
13
14
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16
17
18
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21
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C O N T E N T S (Continued)

No.	Description	Received
O	Issues list	848
P	Chronology of Minnesota legislation	870

1 (The proceedings herein were had and made
2 of record, commencing at 9:06 a.m., Tuesday, August
3 27, 2013, as follows:)

4 JUDGE FETCH: Let the record show that it
5 is 9:00 a.m., Central Time, on August 27th, 2013,
6 and we're present in the hearing room of the Public
7 Service Commission in the State Capitol in
8 Bismarck, North Dakota, for the hearing scheduled
9 in the matter of an application filed by Northern
10 States Power Company (NSP) to increase its rates
11 for electric utility service to provide additional
12 2013 test year annual revenue of \$16,900,000 or a
13 9.25 percent increase over current rates effective
14 for electric service on and after January 17th,
15 2013. This is Case No. PU-12-813. The 2013
16 proposed monthly increase for a residential
17 customer using 750 kilowatt-hours in a winter month
18 is \$6.40 and in a summer month is \$6.64.

19 On January 30th, 2013, the Commission
20 approved NSP's request for an interim rate increase
21 based on the projected 2013 increase request. The
22 interim rate increase of \$14,704,000, or 8.5 --
23 8.05 percent over current rates, became effective
24 for electric service on and after February 16th,
25 2013. NSP is required to refund interim rate

1 amounts in excess of final rates approved by the
2 Commission, including interest.

3 On January 29th, 2013, the Public Service
4 Commission requested the Office of Administrative
5 Hearings provide an administrative law judge to
6 preside as hearing officer in this matter. My name
7 is Bonny M. Fetch and I am the duly designated
8 procedural administrative law judge.

9 And at this time I'm going to ask for
10 appearances for the record, and we'll begin with
11 the applicant, NSP, Kari Valley.

12 MS. VALLEY: Good morning, Commissioners,
13 Judge Fetch. Kari Valley appearing on behalf of
14 Xcel Energy.

15 JUDGE FETCH: And who is with you, Ms.
16 Valley?

17 MR. JOHNSON: Good morning. Rick Johnson
18 from Moss & Barnett also appearing on behalf of
19 Xcel Energy.

20 JUDGE FETCH: Anyone else?

21 MS. VALLEY: Thank you, Your Honor. We
22 have Deb Paulson here to support our rate case,
23 vice president Laura McCarten is here, as well as
24 the witnesses identified in this proceeding.

25 JUDGE FETCH: All right. Thank you. And

1 next the Commission's advocacy staff counsel, Ryan
2 Norrell.

3 MR. NORRELL: Good morning, Your Honor,
4 Commissioners. Ryan Norrell on behalf of North
5 Dakota Public Service Commission advocacy staff.
6 Sitting at the table with me is Sara Cardwell, a
7 public utilities analyst with the Public Service
8 Commission, as well as Mr. Mike Diller, I'd like to
9 identify, is here as well on behalf of advocacy
10 staff, in addition to the witnesses that were
11 submitted prior to this hearing.

12 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. And next the
13 Commission's legal counsel.

14 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: Illona
15 Jeffcoat-Sacco, adviser to the Commission in this
16 case, and also advising the Commission are Jerry
17 Lein and Patrick Fahn.

18 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. Did I miss
19 anyone? All right. And we do have a witness list
20 of 11 identified witnesses for NSP and five
21 identified witnesses identified by Mr. Norrell.

22 Besides those individuals, is there anyone
23 else present, any members of the public or anyone
24 not mentioned who is here and intending to present
25 testimony?

1 All right. I don't see any hands raised.
2 Thank you.

3 The deadline date to file petitions to
4 intervene was May 1st, 2013. There were no
5 petitions filed. There are no intervenors in this
6 proceeding.

7 Members of the Public Service Commission
8 present today are Brian Kalk, Commission chair,
9 Randy Christmann, and Julie Fedorchak. And at this
10 time I'm going to ask for their opening comments
11 beginning with Commissioner Fedorchak, who holds
12 the portfolio in this matter.

13 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Good morning,
14 everyone. Judge Fetch, thank you. Looking forward
15 to today's proceedings. We've been hard at work
16 getting through all the materials. I want to thank
17 everyone for the good job you've done in presenting
18 your cases.

19 As I look at this today, I'm looking at it
20 all about balance. I see that -- I'll be looking
21 at the testimony and listening through two lenses,
22 one lens from the view of a potential investor who
23 is looking at investing in your company and what
24 kind of returns they can get, providing you the
25 capital you need to support your growth, et cetera.

1 Also looking at it from the lens of a ratepayer, a
2 business, say a business in Fargo, who is looking
3 at a potential nearly 10 percent increase in rates
4 and how that might affect them as they move forward
5 in their ability to pay their employees, and these
6 kind of costs kind of pancake, and also the lens of
7 a ratepayer on, say, a fixed income and how they
8 might deal with this.

9 So, again, I think it all comes down to
10 balance. I look forward to hearing your cases and
11 taking the next step in this whole process. Thank
12 you.

13 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you, Commissioner.
14 Commissioner Kalk.

15 COMMISSIONER KALK: Thank you, Your Honor.
16 Thank you, Commissioner Fedorchak, for your
17 comments. I would agree with everything she said,
18 just add a couple thoughts on there.

19 First, I'm going to be trying the iPad
20 instead of using all the paperwork, so I'm not up
21 here Googling, just for the record.

22 The work that everyone has done to this
23 point I really appreciate on the side of the
24 company, Ryan, your crew, advocacy staff, even
25 Commission advisers. There's a lot of work that

1 takes place before we get to this. I always have
2 to remind myself to slow down for the court
3 reporter.

4 But we had the public input sessions.
5 Quite honestly, they were not very well attended.
6 But I think it's just the public doesn't quite
7 understand the process, I don't think. It really
8 behooves all of us to make sure we do a thorough
9 job right because, as Commissioner Fedorchak
10 pointed out, at some point this will be a final
11 decision and it will be looked at for a lot of
12 different reasons and it's important to develop a
13 full record today from all the different
14 viewpoints, and I think that's why the company has
15 so many witnesses and that's why advocacy staff has
16 a lot of people lined up.

17 And with that, I will just caution
18 everyone that a few years ago we had a rate case
19 with MDU that the issues were not as far apart as
20 where we're starting at today, and by the fourth
21 day of testimony it was pretty testy in here, and
22 it worked and sometimes that's just the nature of
23 the beast because there's a lot of facts to go back
24 and forth that people have different viewpoints, so
25 let's try to stay focused and get through this

1 thing, but understand at the end of the day we have
2 a job we all have to do, we're going to ask the
3 questions because the past rates cases that I've
4 been involved in with Xcel have actually turned out
5 very well.

6 The last one we did performance based
7 rates. It turned out very well. We ended up
8 improving some reliability in the eastern part of
9 the grid, so I think we've got a very good track
10 record of developing a good final solution and
11 that's what, I think, the goal here is today, is to
12 get all the cards out on the table, get all the
13 views looked at, answer the questions that we might
14 have, and then we can look forward to coming to a
15 decision. I think it will take a while, but we'll
16 get there.

17 Another thought I would have, if something
18 comes up that's trade secret -- we talked about
19 this a little bit yesterday in our preplanning
20 meeting -- I'll look at the company to make sure
21 that they advise us of such because sometimes we
22 forget about what's trade secret and not. You know
23 the data better than we do. And if that comes up,
24 which it has in the past in rate cases, then we'll
25 stop the broadcasting tape, if you will, and we'll

1 start the one that we record for ourselves for the
2 record.

3 I believe that was all that I had for
4 this. So just thank you all very much. And just
5 for our Minnesota customers and representatives,
6 I've got my Vikings tie on for today and we're
7 looking forward to a good season there as well.
8 Thank you, Your Honor.

9 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you, Commissioner
10 Kalk. Commissioner Christmann.

11 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Not much to add
12 to that, Your Honor, except to point out just a
13 further thought on the public input sessions we had
14 that weren't well attended and we didn't get a lot
15 of feedback there, which bothered me more at the
16 time than it does now.

17 This is my first rate case and as I dig
18 into all these volumes of information, I see that,
19 you know, it would be hard for the average citizen,
20 the normal member of the public, to really provide
21 a lot of good input, and I think the fact is that
22 they have faith in us to make some tough decisions
23 here, and the amount of information that we have
24 shows that there's been a lot of effort put forth
25 by the company, by our advocacy staff, and by the

1 time we get done with hearings and everything, I
2 think we will have done a thorough job of making
3 sure that all the evidence is on the record and
4 before us so that we can make a good decision on
5 behalf of all the people that Commissioner
6 Fedorchak referenced and do the job that we're
7 chosen to do here.

8 So looking forward to the next few days
9 and whatever time we need after that to make sure
10 that we have everything we need to make a good
11 decision.

12 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you, Commissioner
13 Christmann.

14 The issues to be considered in this matter
15 are:

16 1. What is the value of NSP's property,
17 used and useful, for the service and convenience of
18 the public in North Dakota?

19 2. What is NSP's rate of return on its
20 property, used and useful, for the service and
21 convenience of the public in North Dakota?

22 3. What is a just and reasonable rate of
23 return on NSP's property, used and useful, for the
24 service and convenience of the public in North
25 Dakota?

1 4. What rates and charges are necessary
2 to provide a just and reasonable rate of return on
3 NSP's property, used and useful, for the service
4 and convenience of the public in North Dakota?

5 5. Are NSP's proposed rate schedules
6 designed in such a manner that they result in a
7 basis of charge to its customers that is just and
8 reasonable without discrimination?

9 And 6. Other relevant information or
10 proposals concerning the proceeding.

11 I'm going to outline the hearing
12 procedure. We had a prehearing conference about a
13 week or so ago and planned out and agreed to a
14 number of things to make this run a little more
15 smoothly. So this is the hearing procedure that
16 we're going to follow. The applicant, NSP, has the
17 burden to show that its application should be
18 approved by the North Dakota Public Service
19 Commission. NSP has submitted a witness list
20 identifying 11 witnesses, and each witness called
21 by NSP will be subject to cross-examination by Mr.
22 Norrell, questioning from Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco, and
23 after that members of the Public Service Commission
24 may ask questions, I may also ask questions.

25 Following completion -- and we're going to

1 try to get through NSP's case today, and in order
2 to accommodate that, the Commissioners have asked
3 that we extend the time for today to what is
4 necessary up until perhaps eight o'clock, if need
5 be, to complete all of NSP's case in one day. So
6 we're shooting for that goal.

7 All right. After completion of NSP's
8 case, Mr. Norrell will present testimony from
9 Commission advocacy staff. PSC advocacy has
10 identified five witnesses, and each witness called
11 by Mr. Norrell will be subject to cross-examination
12 by Ms. Valley, and after that members of the PSC
13 and I may also ask questions.

14 No one else is here at least today, but I
15 will ask again at the completion of NSP's case and
16 the advocacy staff case whether there is anyone
17 else who has appeared to testify either in support
18 or opposition to the application.

19 As far as exhibits go, NSP has submitted a
20 list of exhibits, NSP 1 through 22. Those exhibits
21 were stipulated to and are admitted into the
22 record, so we do not need to stop each time and ask
23 for that.

24 For advocacy staff I believe there are
25 seven, PSC 1 through 7. Mr. Norrell, were those

1 stipulated to?

2 MR. NORRELL: Yes, Your Honor, they were.

3 JUDGE FETCH: Okay. So PSC Exhibits 1
4 through 7 are also admitted.

5 Okay. Are there going to be additional
6 exhibits?

7 MS. VALLEY: Thank you, Judge Fetch. Each
8 of our witnesses also have an opening statement for
9 today and they have that in written form as well
10 and we can enter that as an exhibit into the record
11 so that people can go back and read that.

12 JUDGE FETCH: Okay. We agreed at the
13 prehearing conference that witnesses are not going
14 to read their prefiled testimony. The
15 Commissioners and the parties have that, so they're
16 not going to read through all of that. We agreed
17 that witnesses can present an opening statement
18 from zero seconds to five minutes in length, and
19 that's just to summarize the salient points in
20 their testimony.

21 All right. This hearing is scheduled for
22 two days, today and tomorrow. If needed, we have a
23 third day on Thursday also set aside. We will take
24 an hour break for lunch and an hour for dinner
25 today and we will be taking breaks throughout the

1 day, as needed. Commissioners or the court
2 reporter, signal me if you need to take a break at
3 any time. Sometimes I'm trying to plow through to
4 get to a breaking point that seems right, but at
5 least every hour and a half the court reporter will
6 need to have a little break, so we'll shoot for
7 that.

8 The proceedings are being recorded for the
9 purpose of creating a record. At the conclusion of
10 this hearing any party not agreeing with the final
11 decision of the PSC has the right to request a
12 rehearing, reopening, or appeal of the decision to
13 District Court under North Dakota Century Code
14 Chapter 28-32. The expense of transcribing these
15 proceedings will be the responsibility of the party
16 appealing the decision.

17 Counsel, are there any questions
18 concerning the procedures?

19 MR. NORRELL: No, Your Honor.

20 JUDGE FETCH: And you're shaking your head
21 no, but you need --

22 MS. VALLEY: No.

23 JUDGE FETCH: -- to make a verbal
24 response.

25 MS. VALLEY: Thank you, Judge Fetch. No.

1 JUDGE FETCH: All right. That's the other
2 thing. I can see you, but we are recording so we
3 need to have all responses be verbal. And for
4 those of you testifying, please try to remember,
5 you know, there's a temptation to rush through,
6 but, you know, the court reporter needs a little
7 time to keep up.

8 All right. Then if we're ready to
9 proceed, NSP may now proceed to present its case
10 and Kari Valley, attorney for NSP, may have five to
11 ten minutes to make an opening statement and then
12 we'll have the same for Mr. Norrell at the
13 beginning of your case.

14 MS. VALLEY: Thank you, Your Honor, Chair
15 Kalk, Commissioners.

16 I am Kari Valley, assistant general
17 counsel for Northern States Power Company. We
18 appreciate the opportunity to be here to present
19 our case directly to you today and for our
20 witnesses to be able to directly respond to the
21 questions posed by the Commission.

22 Our witnesses look forward to the
23 opportunity to explain our business and why this
24 rate request is needed to support continued safe,
25 reliable, and cost-effective service to our

1 customers. We were encouraged by the fact that
2 advocacy staff and their consultants have generally
3 supported the main costs that are driving this
4 case. This includes capital additions to our
5 nuclear fleet, as well as other investments to keep
6 our generation, transmission, and distribution
7 systems functioning and reliable.

8 We were, however, concerned with advocacy
9 staff and their consultants' proposals to
10 significantly change the fundamental ratemaking
11 practices that the company and the Commission have
12 relied upon for many years. Through the course of
13 this proceeding we will demonstrate that our
14 proposal is consistent with standards of
15 ratemaking, reflects the precedent set by this
16 Commission, follows standard accounting principles,
17 and reflects an equitable distribution of costs
18 between jurisdictions.

19 In contrast, the ratemaking treatment
20 proposed by the staff consultants is inconsistent
21 with principles of ratemaking, is a departure from
22 the precedent set by the Commission and North Dakota
23 statute, and is unsupported by the record in the
24 case.

25 Although there is general agreement on our

1 continued system investments, there are a number of
2 disputed ratemaking issues, and I'll briefly
3 highlight some of those.

4 First, the testimony in the record
5 supports the continuation of the use of the 12 CP
6 allocator. The standard adopted by this Commission
7 in reviewing the jurisdictional allocator is that
8 it reasonably reflects the incremental cost caused
9 by each jurisdiction be consistently applied among
10 each of the jurisdictions and is understandable,
11 inexpensive to administer and does not result in
12 large swings in jurisdictional cost responsibility
13 over time.

14 The company's proposal meets this test.
15 First, the jurisdictional allocator is based on
16 cost causation in all of our jurisdictions, and all
17 four of our jurisdictions use the 12 CP allocator.
18 Dr. Pavlovic's proposal to change allocators in
19 North Dakota while other jurisdictions continue to
20 use the 12 CP allocator would reduce the company's
21 revenue requirement by approximately \$20 million.
22 This would be a stranded cost until the company
23 could persuade FERC, the South Dakota Commission,
24 and the Minnesota Commission to adopt a change.
25 However, because this Commission has recognized in

1 prior cases there is no basis to move to a 1 CP
2 allocator, it is unlikely that any other
3 jurisdiction would adopt a change.

4 The use of the 12 CP allocator reflects
5 longstanding regulatory practice in North Dakota.
6 Intervenors have previously argued for a 1 CP
7 allocator and the Commission has repeatedly
8 rejected that move. The 12 CP method was adopted
9 in this state in 1986 in a case that expressly
10 found the 1 CP allocator unreasonable. The
11 Commission adopted a weighted 12 CP method over the
12 1 CP method again in 1991, and the 12 CP method was
13 adopted over that 1 CP method yet again in 1992.

14 This 12 CP method has been consistently
15 used in all of our jurisdictions and the 1 CP has
16 never been used for jurisdictional allocation
17 during all of the time in any of our rate cases.

18 The record reflects there's no reason to
19 depart from this longstanding practice. As Mr.
20 Brockett well explains in his testimony, the 12 CP
21 allocator reflects the need to consider the impact
22 of demand throughout the year on our production
23 portfolio and how transmission serves specific load
24 that peaks at different times of the year.

25 In contrast, Dr. Pavlovic essentially

1 points to the NARUC Manual, which lists 13
2 different methods of allocating cost, including the
3 1 CP method. The record demonstrates that method
4 is simply not appropriate here.

5 With respect to depreciation expense
6 proposed in this proceeding, the company witness
7 Ms. Lisa Perkett will explain that the company's
8 proposal is consistent with the settlement approved
9 in our 2007 rate case and that the company's
10 treatment of removal cost reflects the accounting,
11 reporting, and regulatory practices in North Dakota
12 and everywhere else.

13 In sharp contrast, Mr. Majoros's proposal
14 to stop collecting the remediating nonlegal AROs is
15 unsupported by accounting, reporting, or regulatory
16 practices and has the adverse consequence of
17 burdening future ratepayers with today's cost of
18 service.

19 As Ms. Perkett explains, the company must
20 remove retired distribution lines and poles and
21 buildings which are nonlegal AROs, the same way we
22 have to remove asbestos, which is a legal ARO. If
23 we don't recover the costs of removal of those
24 assets during their lives, we will need to recover
25 those costs from future ratepayers after the assets

1 are retired and when those future ratepayers may
2 not have benefited from the asset during its
3 lifetime.

4 In making his recommendation, staff
5 consultant Mr. Majoros has entirely ignored
6 Schedule 7 to Ms. Perkett's testimony, which is the
7 North Dakota specific depreciation study filed in
8 this case that supports the cost of removal used by
9 the company. Mr. Majoros has not provided evidence
10 that the removal cost for a single asset is
11 overstated. Instead, he argues for a cessation of
12 cost recovery for removal cost for nearly all of
13 our assets. He made the same basic proposal in
14 2007, and that proposal was appropriately not
15 adopted by this Commission. His proposed treatment
16 of nonlegal AROs was a bad choice for our customers
17 then and it continues to be a bad choice for
18 customers today.

19 It's important to note that the company
20 doesn't earn on depreciation. If we don't recover
21 the cost of removal over the life of the asset,
22 then the cost of removal will be added at the time
23 the asset is retired. The company's interests are
24 protected in either case, but Mr. Majoros's
25 proposal is an inappropriate shift of cost

1 responsibility to future customers who would pay
2 for the cost of removal despite having received no
3 benefit from the asset.

4 Recovering retirement cost over the life
5 of the asset is sound ratemaking, in the interest
6 of our current customers, and has been the standard
7 used in North Dakota and every other jurisdiction
8 since regulation began.

9 Mr. King's recommendation on ROE is
10 similarly inconsistent with standards. The ROE
11 recommended by Mr. King is not consistent with
12 returns available from other businesses having
13 similar risks, is not sufficient to support access
14 to capital at reasonable rates, and does not
15 reflect market conditions.

16 In contrast, company witness Ms. Ann
17 Bulkley will demonstrate that the proposed ROE of
18 10.25 percent, in the range of 10 to 10.5 percent,
19 is reasonable and reflects market conditions.

20 And with respect to the test year in this
21 case, the company's proposal matches test year
22 expenses, sales, and revenues to appropriately
23 match costs and revenues over a consecutive
24 12-month period as required by statute, consistent
25 with this Commission's approved test years in every

1 other rate case we have filed.

2 In contrast, Mr. Mugrace uses a three-year
3 historical average to determine all operating
4 expenses, but then uses a future 2013 test year to
5 determine revenues. That proposal is contrary to
6 the express statutory requirement that a test year
7 include 12 consecutive months of revenues matched
8 to the same 12 consecutive months of expenses. His
9 proposed mismatch of historical averages with
10 projected revenues is unprecedented and contrary to
11 the fundamental principles of ratemaking.

12 Mr. Mugrace has provided no evidence that
13 any of our 2013 expenses are not reasonably
14 representative of actual expenses in the test year.
15 Rather, he uses expenses that exclude any
16 consideration of 2013 expenses. And in fact the
17 average expenses proposed by Mr. Mugrace are lower
18 than the expenses approved in our 2010 rate case.
19 His proposal should be rejected.

20 His proposal to disallow incentive comp
21 due to -- compensation due to the decision of the
22 Wisconsin Commission is similarly unsupported. Our
23 witness, Ms. Sharon Koenig, will explain that the
24 annual incentive is a component of total
25 compensation package for our employees, without

1 which we would be paying significantly below market
2 levels. They are not bonuses. They are payments
3 to our employees who have performed in a manner
4 that qualifies them to receive the level of
5 compensation needed to compete with other
6 utilities.

7 JUDGE FETCH: You have one more minute,
8 Ms. Valley.

9 MS. VALLEY: And we also note that there
10 are several issues raised by advocacy staff and
11 their consultants which are not included in our
12 current rate request and the bulk of those issues
13 pertain to the company's resources recovered
14 through the FCR. The company requests that those
15 be addressed in a separate proceeding if they're
16 not part of base rates in this case.

17 So for each and every proposed issue we
18 believe that when you compare our request with the
19 proposals from the staff consultants, you will find
20 that our request is consistent with fundamental and
21 well-established regulatory principles for how
22 rates are set. It's based on costs we will and
23 have incurred as this case has proceeded, and our
24 proposals are consistent with the regulatory
25 compact between the state and the company and

1 appropriately balances the interests of the company
2 and our customers. Thank you.

3 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. Are all 11 of
4 your witnesses present, Ms. Valley?

5 MS. VALLEY: Yes, Your Honor.

6 JUDGE FETCH: Okay.

7 MS. VALLEY: They are present in the
8 building. Some are in another room. Thank you.

9 JUDGE FETCH: All right. Are all five of
10 your witnesses present, Mr. Norrell?

11 MR. NORRELL: Yes, Your Honor.

12 JUDGE FETCH: All right. All witness
13 testimony at this hearing is taken under oath and
14 is subject to penalties for perjury. By law I am
15 required to inform witnesses as to those penalties,
16 and I'm going to do that at this time. I'll repeat
17 it for those who are not here.

18 Perjury is any material misstatement of
19 fact. In North Dakota it is a Class C felony,
20 punishable by a maximum fine of \$5,000, five years
21 in prison, or both.

22 At this time if there is nothing further,
23 we're going to proceed with your first witness.

24 MS. VALLEY: Thank you. The company will
25 call as its first witness Ms. Laura McCarten.

1 JUDGE FETCH: Be sure and hit the button
2 there. It should come on and show blue.

3 All right. Ms. McCarten, please raise
4 your right hand.

5 (Witness sworn.)

6 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. All right. And
7 as agreed -- Commissioner Fedorchak, did you have a
8 question?

9 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: You mentioned --
10 or the company mentioned that the opening comments
11 would be submitted as evidence as well. Do we get
12 copies of those, if it's possible to get those in
13 advance?

14 JUDGE FETCH: Yes. I think that's what's
15 being passed out right now. Is that what you have
16 there is Ms. McCarten's opening statement?

17 MS. PAULSON: Yes.

18 JUDGE FETCH: All right. Thank you. Ms.
19 Valley, proceed.

20 MS. VALLEY: Thank you.

21 **LAURA McCARTEN,**
22 being first duly sworn, was examined and testified
23 as follows:
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DIRECT EXAMINATION

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BY MS. VALLEY:

Q. Ms. McCarten, your testimony is marked as Exhibits 5 and 6 and have been entered into the record. Do you have any corrections to that testimony today?

A. Yes, I do.

Q. Could you please identify those corrections?

A. Yes. The corrections are to Exhibit 6, my rebuttal testimony. There are several places in here, and I will articulate those, where I incorrectly attributed information to witness Mr. Mugrace rather than Dr. Pavlovic, so I will correct those references.

So in Exhibit 6, page 18, line 23, change the reference from Mr. Mugrace to Dr. Pavlovic, and this will be the same correction through each of the line -- pages and lines that I will now go through.

So the first one was page 18, line 23. The second is page 19, line 26. The third is page 20, line 6; again on page 20, line 16; on page 21, line 7, line 12, line 15, and line 16.

And those are all of the corrections I

1 wish to make.

2 Q. Thank you, Ms. McCarten. Ms. McCarten, do
3 you have an opening statement today?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Please proceed.

6 A. Thank you. Good morning, Commissioners,
7 Judge, Commission staff and consultants. I'm Laura
8 McCarten, regional vice president for Northern
9 States Power Company. I appreciate the opportunity
10 to be here today to explain our rate request and
11 help develop a full and thorough record for the
12 Commission.

13 Our modified rate request seeks Commission
14 approval for a \$14.9 million revenue requirement
15 increase based on updated financial information and
16 a 10.25 percent return on equity request. This
17 rate request is necessary to support ongoing
18 investments into our system to ensure safe and
19 reliable service for our customers. These
20 investments include life extensions of both the
21 Prairie Island and Monticello nuclear power plants
22 and a power uprate at Monticello. We are also
23 seeking recovery of investments in transmission and
24 distribution systems. These investments are in our
25 customers' interests, both in the near term and the

1 long term, as reliable electric service is one of
2 the highest priorities for our customers and is a
3 key factor in supporting economic growth.

4 We appreciate advocacy staff and the
5 consultants' general support for the investments we
6 are making. While staff and their consultants
7 don't agree on all aspect of our rate request, we
8 are encouraged that the bulk of our request is not
9 in dispute.

10 We do recognize the cost impact that these
11 investments have on our customers, and we're eager
12 to work with the Commission and staff on ways to
13 reduce or mitigate this cost impact. To this end,
14 I've offered in my rebuttal testimony two
15 proposals. First, the use of a cost-smoothing
16 mechanism for our pension expense and, second, the
17 use of a capital step to address future recovery of
18 capital investments that we know we will be making.
19 I also note that Commission approval of our
20 proposed transmission cost recovery rider would
21 help to mitigate the frequency of future general
22 rate requests. I look forward to a full discussion
23 of these possible mitigation mechanisms.

24 As Ms. Valley noted, we are concerned with
25 consultants' proposals to reverse longstanding

1 ratemaking processes -- practices in North Dakota.
2 We believe it is a better practice, is in the
3 interests of our customers, and is consistent with
4 current circumstances to use the ratemaking
5 methodologies that this Commission has had in place
6 for 20 years or more.

7 The most significant proposed change is
8 that to our demand allocator. As company witness
9 Scott Brockett will explain in more detail, using a
10 12 CP allocator remains the most appropriate
11 jurisdictional allocation method for an integrated
12 system such as ours, is consistent with standards
13 of ratemaking and with this Commission's precedent
14 and is supported by the record in this case.

15 We also recognize the concerns of the
16 Commission and staff regarding the energy policy
17 differences between states and how these
18 differences may affect our North Dakota customers.
19 We have been complying with commitments to this
20 Commission with respect to these issues and we
21 believe that we're making prudent -- we're making
22 resource decisions that are prudent and in the
23 interests of all of our customers. We'll continue
24 to meet these commitments to ensure that this
25 Commission's concerns are met while allowing the

1 company to recover its cost of service and earn a
2 reasonable rate of return.

3 Other recommendations of staff and their
4 consultants relate to costs that are not part of
5 this rate request. For example, Dr. Pavlovic
6 recommends disallowance of further recovery in our
7 fuel cost rider of the costs of certain power
8 purchase agreements that have been in place for
9 several years. Because these costs are recovered
10 in the fuel clause rider, they are by definition
11 not part of base rates and thus not part of this
12 pending rate request. But should the Commission
13 want to address recovery of these power purchase
14 agreement costs in the fuel clause rider, the
15 appropriate way to do so would be with a separate
16 proceeding where a complete record can be
17 developed. And we're very willing to work with the
18 Commission and staff to ensure that the Commission
19 has a timely opportunity to review any costs that
20 we propose to recover through the fuel clause
21 rider.

22 Similarly, staff's recommendation to
23 disallow certain costs of new wind acquisitions
24 should be addressed in the advance determination of
25 prudence dockets that are already in place for

1 those projects. Again, those projects are not part
2 of this rate case.

3 Finally, I want to acknowledge the
4 Commission's interest in and concerns with the new
5 Minnesota solar standards. I commit to you that we
6 will make every effort to mitigate the impact of
7 this Minnesota requirement on our North Dakota
8 customers.

9 In summary, we appreciate the general
10 agreement of the parties on the prudence of the
11 necessary investments that are the drivers for this
12 case. However, the disagreements are important in
13 both -- are significant in terms of both importance
14 and magnitude. We believe that the application of
15 longstanding ratemaking principles in North Dakota
16 will result in an outcome that is fair, consistent
17 with this Commission's precedent and current
18 circumstances, and that appropriately balances the
19 interests of our customers with that of the
20 company. And beyond this rate case, we look
21 forward to working in a continued cooperative
22 effort with the staff and the Commission on fuel
23 clause rider issues and other energy policy issues
24 that could affect our customers in North Dakota.
25 Thank you.

1 JUDGE FETCH: All right. And that is
2 marked as NSP Exhibit 23. Mr. Norrell, is there
3 any objection to this being entered?

4 MR. NORRELL: No, Your Honor.

5 JUDGE FETCH: All right. Thank you. NSP
6 23 is admitted.

7 MS. VALLEY: Thank you, Your Honor. The
8 witness is available for cross-examination.

9 JUDGE FETCH: Mr. Norrell.

10 MR. NORRELL: Thank you, Your Honor.

11 **CROSS-EXAMINATION**

12 **BY MR. NORRELL:**

13 Q. Ms. McCarten.

14 A. Good morning.

15 Q. Good morning. I would like to just start
16 with some broad and maybe narrow down on some of
17 our questions here. One of the things that we
18 noticed throughout your testimony is the repeated
19 statement that the company -- and other witnesses
20 state this as well -- that the company is in a
21 significant -- cycle of significant system
22 investment and has been spending quite a bit of
23 money each year to accommodate this. Could you
24 state when the company believes this system of
25 investment will end? Is there an end in sight?

1 A. Mr. Norrell, I believe that we do have --
2 in this year and the next year and I think in the
3 subsequent year, we do have costs that will
4 continue to be incurred to finish out investments
5 in some of our major -- to finish out the full
6 project completion of some of the major investments
7 that we are making. That includes investments to
8 finish out the nuclear projects, the life extension
9 which adds 20 years of life for those nuclear power
10 plants, and significant investments that complete
11 some of our major transmission projects, for
12 example, the CapX2020 projects.

13 I believe that takes us into the next
14 couple of years. Beyond that I'm not aware of
15 projects of that magnitude that are peeking in, so
16 I think that over the next couple of years these
17 significant investments will be completed and those
18 costs will show up.

19 Q. So we're looking 2015, 2016; would that be
20 appropriate?

21 A. I don't have that information right in
22 front of me, but I think it's through probably 2016
23 when the major investments in those CapX2020
24 transmission projects are concluded.

25 Q. And are these projects -- are these going

1 to be of a benefit to the ratepayers, to the actual
2 subscribers and customers in North Dakota?

3 A. Yes. For example, the investments in our
4 nuclear power plants are investments that allow
5 those plants to operate for another 20 years, it's
6 good baseload, well-priced, clean energy that
7 serves all customers in our integrated system,
8 including North Dakota customers.

9 The investments in our high-voltage
10 transmission system ensure that the regional
11 transmission system will continue to operate
12 reliably, meet federal standards for redundancy and
13 reliability, and be present to connect to new power
14 sources in the future as those are needed. Those
15 benefits accrue to all of our customers in the
16 integrated system, including North Dakota
17 customers.

18 JUDGE FETCH: Excuse me one second. Could
19 you slow down just a little bit, Ms. McCarten. At
20 the beginning I said the proceedings are being
21 recorded. They are being recorded by a court
22 reporter and she needs to be able to get what
23 you're saying.

24 THE WITNESS: Thank you, Judge. I
25 appreciate that caution. I will do so.

1 JUDGE FETCH: Mr. Norrell, continue.

2 MR. NORRELL: Thank you.

3 Q. (MR. NORRELL CONTINUING) Is it the
4 company's position that it deserves a higher ROE
5 because of this particular investment cycle?

6 A. I would say our position is that we should
7 get an ROE that is commensurate with our investment
8 needs to serve our customers, and one of the major
9 drivers for setting an ROE is what is needed to
10 attract capital. We need to -- we are a very
11 capital-intensive business, we need to borrow money
12 to make the investments which are very costly in
13 our system, and we ask an ROE level that we think
14 gives us the opportunity to appropriately attract
15 capital to support those investments.

16 Q. Would it be appropriate then when the
17 investment cycle ends to expect a lower return or
18 to seek a lower return going forward after that?

19 A. Mr. Norrell, I would perhaps direct that
20 question to our future witness Ann Bulkley, but I
21 think that every rate case I think we would make
22 the case as to the circumstances at that time, what
23 is appropriate to attract the capital that's needed
24 to invest in our company, and it would entail
25 looking at the financial markets and other

1 competing investments that investors have available
2 to them.

3 Q. By virtue of working with the PSC we get
4 to hear from some customers. Some customers have
5 expressed concern that the size of this increase is
6 excessive and they can't afford it. We have
7 retired individuals on fixed incomes who have
8 similar concerns. How would you respond to these
9 concerns of customers?

10 A. I appreciate that, and we hear directly
11 from customers as well those concerns. I think
12 what we're trying to do is to operate our business
13 as efficiently as possible, but we have an
14 obligation to serve customers, so when we identify
15 a need, either for power supply or investments in
16 the grid to ensure reliability, we have an
17 obligation to act on that. I would say that we act
18 on it in a method that we think is prudent and try
19 to manage costs to keep them as low as possible.

20 We do also try to offer our customers
21 suggestions on how they can manage their energy use
22 so that they can control their bill even as rates
23 go up. So we appreciate the concern that customers
24 have, but I think the consequences of not making
25 these investments would be even worse for our

1 customers.

2 Q. You had mentioned maybe some encouragement
3 with customers on managing their energy use,
4 balancing that with the obligation to serve those
5 customers. It seems then like the burden would be
6 put on the customer to conserve -- you know, it's
7 on the customer to save the costs. What kind of
8 incentives are there on the company to cut the
9 costs?

10 A. I think that rate cases like these are
11 clearly incentives, where we have to come in and
12 show that the costs that we incur are necessary to
13 run the business, that we are making -- that
14 they're prudent costs, and that we're managing our
15 business well. So certainly with the oversight of
16 regulators we do have that incentive.

17 I think that we -- throughout our
18 business, we manage as a business, we manage the
19 budget, things happen that are outside of our plan
20 and we have to react to those, so it's sort of a
21 constant thing that we look at every day as how are
22 we managing our business, where are the costs,
23 where can we avoid costs if possible, but at the
24 end of the day we still have this obligation to
25 serve and invest in a system in order to provide

1 reliable, safe service to our customers.

2 Q. Naturally from a customer's perspective,
3 an easy target is always up at the top of a
4 company, why the executives got an X percent amount
5 of raise. Could you address executive pay? Is
6 that an area where possibly the company could
7 legitimately look at cutting costs there?

8 A. In response to that, I would say that the
9 -- our decisions on compensation for every employee
10 in the company from executives through to the front
11 line, union labor, people like me, everybody in the
12 company, it's all based upon trying to establish
13 ourselves to be competitive in the market. We do
14 need to attract employees that are skilled in order
15 to again provide good service to our customers, and
16 if we don't offer a market-competitive
17 compensation, we won't be able to attract or
18 retrain -- or attract or retain the type of skilled
19 employees that we need to run the business. I
20 can't speak to the particulars of the executives'
21 compensation, but I can tell you that all of our
22 compensation is driven by the market
23 competitiveness.

24 Q. The company, I believe, told its investors
25 that it had a good year in 2012. Would you agree

1 that 2012 was a good year for the company?

2 A. I believe that's correct for Xcel Energy,
3 the overall holding company.

4 Q. Okay. If Xcel Energy had a good year in
5 2012, why is there a need for a rate case in 2013?

6 A. Okay. So this particular rate case is
7 looking at our performance in this jurisdiction,
8 North Dakota, and I think that what we've presented
9 is evidence that our revenue requirements are
10 increasing because of the investments we're making
11 into the NSP system to serve all of our customers,
12 and without this request, then we would not be
13 performing anywhere near what would be a targeted
14 or expected level of financial performance that our
15 investors are looking for for this jurisdiction,
16 nor would we really be able to provide the service
17 level that our customers need.

18 So the Xcel Energy overall holding
19 company, the performance of that is affected by the
20 performance of each of the four operating
21 companies, NSP-Minnesota, NSP-Wisconsin, Public
22 Service of Colorado, and Southwestern Public
23 Service, which is based in Texas. So the overall
24 performance of Xcel Energy is the aggregate of all
25 of those, but for this rate case we're looking at

1 the particulars of this jurisdiction.

2 Q. Okay. One of the things that's been
3 discussed is the fuel clause rider, fuel cost
4 rider, and it's been stated by the company that
5 this is not part of this case and should be
6 addressed in a separate case. In North Dakota we
7 have a small commission, small staff. You know, it
8 would be a burden upon the Commission to undertake
9 that kind of project. Would it be a burden on the
10 company, would it incur more costs on the company,
11 which would then be passed along to customers, if
12 we did a separate proceeding on the FCR?

13 A. I assume so, but I would also say that
14 without such a proceeding, we don't have a complete
15 record on which to make a decision, so I think it
16 would be appropriate to do that.

17 Q. When most customers look at their bill,
18 they probably look at the total, they're not
19 splitting down the bill. Do you think the
20 customers would react differently if the rate base
21 was lower as opposed to the cost rider, or would it
22 be the same reaction to a customer?

23 A. I agree with you, customers look at the
24 bottom line, the total bill.

25 Q. As some of the -- some of the ways to

1 reduce expense and costs to the company, you
2 mentioned in your testimony the Black Dog and
3 Prairie Island uprates were canceled and because
4 the CapX2020 programs were spread over time, those
5 are examples of smoothing some costs. Were those
6 projects, in particular Black Dog and Prairie
7 Island uprates, were those as a result of lack of
8 load that those were actually cut or canceled over
9 time?

10 A. With respect to the Prairie Island uprate,
11 this was a project where we were doing investments
12 at the Prairie Island nuclear plant in order to
13 allow it to produce more power, a significant
14 amount of more power, I think something on the
15 order of 70 megawatts. And as we proceeded with
16 that project, circumstances changed. I think that
17 the future customer growth did change and was
18 reduced. Also another change that was happening is
19 the costs of completing that project were starting
20 to -- we were estimating they would be higher than
21 we originally thought and at the same time the
22 costs of alternative energy supplies, particularly
23 those fueled by natural gas, were coming down.
24 When we put all that together, we said the need is
25 less, the cost of meeting that need by continuing

1 the Prairie Island project is greater than we first
2 thought, and the cost of alternatives to provide
3 that power supply is now less costly. We put that
4 all together and we said it no longer is in the
5 best interests of our customers to conclude the
6 Prairie Island uprate project.

7 Oh, excuse me. Then you asked about the
8 Black Dog project.

9 Q. Yep.

10 A. So the Black Dog project was a proposal to
11 build a certain type of power plant, add a unit at
12 an existing power plant, something called a
13 combined cycle natural gas fueled power plant.
14 That's the type of power plant that serves a
15 particular type of need for our customers. It's
16 not a peaking need typically. It's something that
17 runs more often over the course of a year, and it's
18 more costly than, say, a peaking power plant.

19 Again, as we saw our customer needs
20 changing, our forecast of what our customer needs
21 would be out over the future and the cost of that
22 project, it again seemed to us that that wasn't the
23 best project to meet our customers' needs, it
24 wasn't the most cost-effective project to meet our
25 customers' needs so we also ceased that project.

1 Q. You mentioned looking long term over
2 customer needs. It sounds like there's not as much
3 growth as anticipated. Would it be accurate to say
4 that?

5 A. I think since 2008 there was a huge
6 downturn in energy usage by our customers and
7 that's slowly coming back, but I think that we are
8 forecasting a much flatter rate of growth out into
9 the future than what most utilities saw prior to
10 2008.

11 Q. Is the company currently planning an
12 acquisition of about 750 megawatts of wind energy?

13 A. That's correct. We have proposed in our
14 commissions -- various commissions to secure those.
15 It's four projects at this point, I believe, yes.

16 Q. What impact does that have with a
17 potential lower or planing load growth over time?
18 How does that help smooth out investments over
19 time?

20 A. Those particular projects will overall
21 reduce customer costs because they will displace
22 the use of energy generated by other higher-cost
23 energy sources. So it may serve some growth, but
24 even if there was no growth, it would displace
25 higher-priced generation, so net net reduce costs

1 to our customers.

2 Q. Would the company be looking at replacing
3 those other units if there wasn't a 30 percent
4 renewable portfolio standard in Minnesota?

5 A. Is your question -- those other units, you
6 mean the 750 megawatts of proposed wind? Is that
7 what you're referring to?

8 Q. The units that that proposed wind project
9 would replace, would the company be looking at
10 those wind projects if there wasn't the 30 percent
11 renewable portfolio in place?

12 A. Yes, those projects serve our customers on
13 their face by the reduced cost to customers that
14 they provide, so that alone provides value to our
15 customers.

16 Q. How much of the company's transmission
17 expenditures go into -- how much percent do you put
18 into wind transmission -- transmission from the
19 wind farms to the baseload? Sorry.

20 A. Mr. Norrell, I don't think I can answer
21 that question. I know several years ago there were
22 some projects that there was some transmission
23 investment that was tied directly to wind, but, for
24 example, the CapX2020, that's a general purpose
25 that it serves. So I don't think I can answer your

1 question and perhaps there's someone else here we
2 can direct that to.

3 Q. We've seen studies where it looks like up
4 to 75 percent of the cost of transmission
5 investments are necessary for wind integration, so
6 I guess our question is wondering, if there wasn't
7 this additional wind development, would customers'
8 costs be lower?

9 A. Mr. Norrell, I believe that the rationale
10 and the reason that we got approval from our
11 regulatory commissions to proceed with the CapX2020
12 projects, which are 345 kV high-voltage
13 transmission, comes into North Dakota, into South
14 Dakota and over to Wisconsin, that that was
15 approved based upon an overall providing value
16 for -- pertaining to local reliability issues,
17 regional reliability issues, and providing a more
18 robust network that would connect to all types of
19 energy sources. I'm not familiar with what you're
20 referring to with the 70 percent, so I'm not
21 familiar with that piece of information. I don't
22 think I've seen that.

23 Q. Looking to other ways the company could
24 control costs, we've heard that the company is
25 moving to new corporate headquarters. What's going

1 to happen to the old corporate headquarters on the
2 Nicollet Mall in Minneapolis?

3 A. Okay. So these are costs that are not
4 part of this rate case, first of all. This is a
5 future project. But we have an existing corporate
6 headquarters on Nicollet Mall in Minneapolis. We
7 also lease space in another building that's about
8 two blocks away where a lot of office personnel are
9 housed. The new building will be built across the
10 street from the existing corporate headquarters, so
11 we will retain the existing corporate headquarters,
12 and then rather than leasing space where we
13 currently do, we'll have a new building and we'll
14 be leasing that space, and we'll bring all the
15 employees from that other building over across the
16 street to our existing headquarters. So we'll keep
17 our existing building that we currently own and
18 we'll stop leasing in the current location and,
19 instead, occupy the new building, which we will be
20 occupying under a lease arrangement. I think that
21 was expected in about 2016.

22 Q. Will this be saving customers in the end
23 money at all?

24 A. My understanding is that our valuation is
25 that it's very comparable in cost to continuing the

1 lease at the existing building that we have today.
2 I believe we've also identified nonquantified
3 benefits that we think we will experience in terms
4 of greater efficiency in being able to work with
5 two buildings just right across the street from
6 each other. We think -- I mean, I don't know all
7 the particulars of that, but I think that we
8 believe it is a good investment for our customers.

9 Q. Could you give us an example of how those
10 nonquantified benefits would help a customer?

11 A. Well, again, I don't have that in front of
12 me because it's not part of this case, we're not
13 asking for cost recovery of that future investment,
14 so, I'm sorry, I don't have that information
15 readily available.

16 Q. Okay. So let's look to a past issue.
17 Could you just briefly describe the Sherco failure
18 for the Commission?

19 A. I will try. I'm somewhat familiar with
20 that. But we have our largest power plant in the
21 State of Minnesota that serves all of our
22 customers, it's a coal-fueled power plant called
23 Sherburne County, called Sherco for short. There
24 are three coal-burning units there. The Sherco 3
25 was the unit that experienced this failure, and I

1 believe it was in the fall of 2012, approximately
2 November.

3 As they were coming out of a maintenance
4 outage, which we periodically do at these large
5 units to refurbish everything, one of the most
6 significant steps at startup is to take the massive
7 turbine generator unit, which is truly massive, and
8 to put it through tests before you actually bring
9 it up and start the plant operating in normal
10 operation, and during one of those tests that
11 turbine generator unit experienced a massive
12 failure and suffered extensive damage to the
13 turbine generator, other parts of that unit.

14 We are now -- we have gone through a very
15 massive, extensive repair process. We are at this
16 moment going through startup activities and testing
17 activities. If all goes well, we expect to have
18 that unit back synchronized to the grid and
19 generating power by the end of September.

20 Q. Who is paying for the repair of this
21 Sherco 3 unit?

22 A. It's my understanding that most of that is
23 being covered by the insurance cost that we carry
24 for that unit.

25 Q. Will insurance then in turn go up because

1 of this accident?

2 A. I do not know.

3 Q. If insurance did indeed go up, how would
4 the increase in the insurance costs be recovered?

5 A. The question of whether insurance costs
6 will go up -- I guess one thing I would also say is
7 that we have determined through extensive forensic
8 analysis of that accident what the cause was. The
9 root cause was in the manufacturing of the turbine
10 itself. There was something called stress
11 corrosion cracking that happened that was due to
12 original manufacturing methodology or materials. I
13 don't know whether that then would influence our
14 insurance because it wasn't an operational issue on
15 our part.

16 If insurance costs would go up in any part
17 of our business, I do believe that's part of the
18 cost of doing business and we would certainly stand
19 to prove that we've secured reasonably priced,
20 prudently priced coverage, but we would see that as
21 a cost of business and so we would seek recovery of
22 that through our rates.

23 Q. I apologize. Just consulting over here in
24 the corner.

25 A. That's okay. I'll get a drink.

1 Q. With the -- we talked earlier about the
2 change in the Prairie Island plant, so it looked
3 like there were some potential cost overruns of
4 nuclear -- or it appears -- there's an appearance
5 at least of cost overruns in nuclear projects,
6 there's major repairs needed at Black Dog, Sherco
7 you've discussed potentially that may not have been
8 a company issue, but there's still the question
9 that we'd like to ask posed on behalf of consumers
10 is, is there a pattern of mismanagement at the
11 company? What are your thoughts on that question?

12 A. My thoughts are, no, there's not. And I'm
13 not sure what your reference was to the repairs at
14 Black Dog.

15 Q. The unit 2, 5.

16 A. Repairs? I'm sorry. I think you
17 mentioned -- you used the term repairs at Black
18 Dog. I'm not sure what that's referencing.

19 Q. I'm not sure either. We'll just strike
20 this line of questioning.

21 A. Okay. Thank you.

22 Q. Let's go to the 12 CP method here. On the
23 bottom of page 2 and continuing onto page 3 of your
24 rebuttal, you state that the company -- the CP
25 method preserves the company's ability to provide

1 the kind of service your customers depend on and
2 expect. Would you please explain what kind of
3 service that is that the customers depend on and
4 expect, from your position, from your opinion?

5 A. Sure. Our customers expect that we're
6 going to provide safe electrical service at all
7 times. They expect and require highly reliable
8 electric service. They expect that we are planning
9 our business in a way that looks to the future and
10 takes steps now such that we don't fall into
11 situations of compromising safety or reliability.
12 Our customers want us to be cost-effective. They
13 want us to spend the money we need to, but not
14 more. They want to have an affordable bill. We
15 know that. Our customers also want us to do all of
16 those things as well as possible, and to the extent
17 that we can also continue to achieve clean energy,
18 they want that as well. So at a very high level, I
19 think those are definitely our customers'
20 expectations.

21 MR. NORRELL: I would like to -- with your
22 permission, Your Honor, I would like to approach
23 the stand. I have an exhibit for the witness and I
24 will definitely provide this to counsel as well.

25 JUDGE FETCH: Go ahead, Mr. Norrell. You

1 just have one copy?

2 MR. NORRELL: I do not. I'm just
3 providing it for review.

4 JUDGE FETCH: All right. This will be PSC
5 8.

6 COMMISSIONER KALK: Bigger font is not a
7 crime, just so you know, Ryan.

8 JUDGE FETCH: And what is this exhibit,
9 Mr. Norrell?

10 MR. NORRELL: This is a cable outage
11 report. It is our belief that this is the latest.

12 Q. (MR. NORRELL CONTINUING) Have you seen
13 this before, Ms. McCarten?

14 A. I have not reviewed this before, but I'm
15 familiar with the compliance reporting of this type
16 of information with the fact that that does exist.

17 MR. NORRELL: The counsel -- or PSC staff
18 would like to admit this as PSC 8.

19 JUDGE FETCH: Any objection, Ms. Valley?

20 MS. VALLEY: No. Thank you, Your Honor.

21 JUDGE FETCH: All right. PSC Exhibit 8 is
22 admitted. Proceed, Mr. Norrell, please.

23 MR. NORRELL: Thank you.

24 Q. (MR. NORRELL CONTINUING) I believe if you
25 look at the bottom, this is outages through the end

1 of June; is that correct?

2 A. That appears to be correct, yes.

3 Q. How many outages then would this be -- the
4 total for the first six months of 2013?

5 A. This chart has 33 lines in it. Each
6 appears to designate a separate outage.

7 Q. Okay. Could you look at line number 7 and
8 tell us where the outage was, how long it was and
9 how many customers were affected?

10 A. Line 7, it's a February 16th event, 10:13
11 a.m., the outage duration is two hours and 25
12 minutes, it occurred in Grand Forks, 1,139
13 customers were impacted.

14 Q. Could you look at line 12 as well and
15 state the same, the date, the duration, the
16 location and how many customers?

17 A. Yes. March 29th, 5:03 p.m., the duration
18 was one hour and six minutes, it occurred in Grand
19 Forks, and 1,359 customers were affected.

20 Q. Do you know if these lines will be
21 replaced and, if not, what is the criteria for when
22 these lines would be replaced?

23 A. You know, since I haven't seen this
24 before, I think this question would be best
25 answered by one of our other witnesses.

1 Q. Do you know which witness?

2 A. Steve Foss.

3 Q. Thank you. The company each year prepares
4 a comparison study for Xcel Energy and compares the
5 company to peer utility groups; is that correct?

6 A. I'm aware that we do that on a variety of
7 comparisons and performance metrics, so a lot of
8 that happens.

9 Q. I'd like to ask you a couple questions in
10 regard to one.

11 MR. NORRELL: May I approach the stand,
12 Your Honor?

13 JUDGE FETCH: Yes, you may.

14 MR. NORRELL: Your Honor, what I have
15 handed out is a -- it's actually a response to data
16 request 10-003, a supplemental response, and
17 Commission staff would like to admit this as PSC 9.

18 JUDGE FETCH: Is there any objection, Ms.
19 Valley?

20 MS. VALLEY: Thank you, Your Honor. No
21 objection.

22 JUDGE FETCH: Okay. PSC Exhibit 9 is
23 admitted.

24 Q. (MR. NORRELL CONTINUING) Ms. McCarten,
25 are you familiar with the document in front of you?

1 A. I don't think I've reviewed this.

2 Q. Could you look at the top page, which is
3 in the bottom marked page 2. On the docket sticker
4 it's marked Attachment A, page 3 of 23.

5 A. Okay. I have that.

6 Q. Could you look for us and tell us how many
7 rankings in the top 10 percent or top quarter
8 NSP-Minnesota had for 2012?

9 A. This report of the rankings for 2011?

10 Q. I'm sorry. Yes, 2011.

11 A. This reports -- again, your question is
12 for NSP-Minnesota?

13 Q. Yes.

14 A. Okay. It says zero in the top decile.

15 Q. Did NSP-Minnesota fare better in previous
16 years than in this report?

17 A. I don't know.

18 Q. Do you happen to know what the primary
19 causes of why there weren't any top rankings in
20 this report?

21 A. I can't speak to this report specifically,
22 but, if I could, I would just note that we've
23 talked about the fact that our company is in a
24 significant investment cycle right now to refresh
25 and modernize our system, things like investing in

1 the nuclear power plants. Every utility could be
2 at a different point in that cycle, so the things
3 that affect costs are -- they're complex and I
4 don't know how those other -- where those other
5 utilities are that the comparison is here in
6 particular with respect to cost.

7 Q. I apologize just a second. Try to get
8 some documents straight here.

9 On page -- it's marked 16 on the bottom
10 right-hand corner. I apologize. I think these are
11 double-sided too. That's part of the issue I'm
12 having on my page is flipping back and forth.

13 It states on the bottom right-hand corner,
14 retail sales per megawatt-hour. This shows that
15 NSP has the highest retail sales per megawatt-hour.
16 How do you reconcile this with trying to encourage
17 customers to use less electricity?

18 A. So this chart shows three lines on it. I
19 really don't know how this chart was calculated, so
20 I just can't answer your question. I'm just not
21 familiar with this document.

22 Q. Okay. At other places in this document, I
23 believe it would be back on page 10, it states the
24 highest percent of non-fuel O&M costs as compared
25 to retail revenue and megawatt sales. In 2011 --

1 or 2010, 2011, and 2012, NSPM had the highest
2 non-fuel O&M costs relative to retail sales. Do
3 you know why that would be?

4 A. Just to be sure I'm with you, you're
5 referring to page 10? It's labeled as page 10 in
6 the lower right hand?

7 Q. Yes.

8 A. And the charts that I see are for 2009,
9 2010, 2011.

10 Q. Oh, I apologize. I'm on Attachment B.
11 This would be page -- I believe there are two
12 attachments. They're two different years.

13 A. Okay. So --

14 Q. I'm sorry.

15 A. So Attachment B, page 11 of 23?

16 Q. Yes.

17 A. And could you please ask the question
18 again.

19 Q. I'm sorry. Page 10 -- okay. This shows
20 that NSPM has the highest non-fuel operating and
21 maintenance costs as related to retail
22 megawatt-hour sales. Do you know why that would
23 be?

24 A. I don't know particularly why that would
25 be other than to say that whatever costs we need to

1 run our business, which, you know, always goes
2 through extensive review by our regulatory
3 commissions over these periods.

4 Q. Okay. We're done with this attachment,
5 with this exhibit.

6 JUDGE FETCH: Where did you get this
7 information from, Mr. Norrell?

8 MR. NORRELL: It was submitted as part of
9 a data request earlier in the case. It is not part
10 of the --

11 JUDGE FETCH: So it came from Xcel Energy?

12 MR. NORRELL: Yes, it did come from Xcel
13 Energy.

14 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you.

15 Q. (MR. NORRELL CONTINUING) The company
16 allocates all transmission costs to all
17 jurisdictions; is that correct?

18 A. It's my understanding that transmission
19 costs are shared across all of our jurisdictions,
20 yes.

21 Q. Even when a transmission line might be
22 between two substations in Minnesota?

23 A. That might be a question better directed
24 to Steve Foss, but I think the criteria is that
25 it's an element of the high-voltage grid that's

1 needed for regional reliability, and, interestingly
2 enough, with the grid and the way it works, you can
3 have segments that are very critical that can be
4 very far afield from a particular customer but that
5 customer can be affected by the performance of a
6 segment of the high-voltage transmission grid that
7 isn't directly next-door to it.

8 Q. In testimony from the company, from
9 yourself as well as other witnesses, the company
10 has stated that there's been things that are based
11 on precedence here. Would the company -- if the
12 Commission was looking to change or move from
13 precedence to something that benefited the company,
14 would the company be raising the same argument in
15 that situation?

16 A. I think we would always take the position
17 that the best decisions are guided by principled
18 ratemaking and the regulatory compact that says
19 what is the cost of the activity, who should
20 properly pay for that activity, did the customer --
21 did the company incur reasonable and prudent costs
22 to provide the service, and what's the correct
23 balance between customers and the company. So I
24 think we would always come to every question with
25 that same perspective, is what do the principles of

1 ratemaking and the regulatory compact direct us to
2 and what do the facts tell us.

3 Q. Could you explain for the Commission
4 briefly what a 12-month coincidental peak demand
5 allocation method is?

6 A. I'm definitely going to refer you to our
7 witness on that, Scott Brockett.

8 Q. Do you know how long the company has been
9 using a 12 CP method?

10 A. I am going actually by Ms. Valley's
11 opening statement that we have been using this for,
12 I think, a couple of decades across all of our
13 jurisdictions here in the NSP integrated system
14 here, so that would be North Dakota, South Dakota,
15 Minnesota, Wisconsin.

16 Q. Do you know which method the company used
17 prior to 12 CP?

18 A. I don't.

19 Q. You had stated, and Ms. Valley had stated
20 as well in opening statements, about the principles
21 of ratemaking. Is 1 CP an approved method of
22 ratemaking?

23 A. I would again direct you to our expert
24 witness, Scott Brockett, for that discussion.

25 Q. An issue that you had brought up was the,

1 I believe -- let me check real quick. In the
2 rebuttal testimony and also in other places it's
3 discussed the incentive compensation issues. Do
4 you happen to know, did Wisconsin approve or deny
5 incentive compensation for NSP employees?

6 A. I believe the Wisconsin Commission denied
7 that. If I can just -- if I may just take a look
8 at my --

9 Q. I believe page 10 of your rebuttal
10 testimony.

11 A. Thank you. Yes, the Wisconsin Public
12 Service Commission decided to not allow incentive
13 compensation in rates.

14 Q. Do you know the reason why Wisconsin
15 disallowed those?

16 A. I don't.

17 Q. Do you know, do you have a witness who
18 could testify to those reasons?

19 A. Do we have a witness who could testify as
20 to why Wisconsin disallowed the incentive
21 compensation? I know we have an incentive
22 compensation witness. I'm not sure if she's
23 familiar with the Wisconsin Commission's decision
24 and rationale of that.

25 I would note -- I guess I've made this

1 point in my testimony -- that pulling a single
2 aspect of a Commission's decision and using it to
3 guide a decision here is really not consistent with
4 the ratemaking, which looks at the overall revenue
5 requirement, it looks at the totality of how issues
6 were handled. The Wisconsin Commission also
7 awarded us a 10.4 ROE and allowed for about 90
8 percent recovery of the costs that we requested,
9 so --

10 Q. So it's fair to say, though, that looking
11 to other states isn't out of the question just to
12 get a gauge of the regulatory environment?

13 A. In general I think that that's true, we do
14 look to other states for directions that are
15 happening.

16 Q. On page 15 of your rebuttal testimony we
17 talk about charitable contributions, and you state
18 that these have been approved in North Dakota in
19 the past. Do you know if those were approved via a
20 settlement agreement, however?

21 A. I'm not certain, Mr. Norrell. I'm sorry.

22 Q. How does a charitable contribution enhance
23 or provide a better utility service to your
24 customers?

25 A. I think for both charitable contributions

1 and the contributions we make to economic activity
2 in the communities we serve are a couple of things.
3 They're part of what our customers and our
4 communities expect of us as corporate citizens of
5 that community. I think it helps to build a strong
6 community, it helps to encourage economic vitality
7 and hopefully economic growth, and that in turn
8 helps all of our customers because as we have more
9 units of energy to spread fixed costs over, if we
10 have good economic growth, then customers benefit
11 because their share of the costs are less than they
12 could otherwise be.

13 We actually saw this when we had a
14 significant economic downturn and units of energy
15 dropped significantly, we had to share more
16 costs -- this was in a different jurisdiction, but
17 just by way of illustration, it's sort of an
18 extreme, we had to share fixed costs over fewer
19 units of energy and in that case that was a
20 contributor to a rate request. So encouraging
21 economic vitality we think helps our customers in
22 that roundabout way of helping to spread fixed
23 costs over more energy usage.

24 Q. Do the customers have any sort of say in
25 which economic development organizations or which

1 charities get the funds that NSP gives to them or
2 donates?

3 A. We are guided in our decisions about where
4 we contribute for charitable contributions and
5 economic activity that we engage in by the
6 communities that we serve and more specifically by
7 the employees of Xcel Energy that live in those
8 communities and are leaders of those communities.
9 So we think that we are well aligned in our
10 communities' desires and needs and we make -- our
11 decisions for charitable and economic activity are
12 informed by those, so I think we are responsive to
13 our overall customer intentions or desires.

14 Q. What if a customer or even an employee
15 disagrees with where the money is going, is there
16 any sort of avenue for redress, or how do they
17 change that?

18 A. Well, if someone were to take issue with
19 how we're making charitable contributions or making
20 economic development, they certainly can reach out
21 to us and share their concerns with us. In fact,
22 people do that. But at some point we have to
23 figure out how do we act in a manner that we think
24 comports with the interests of the majority of our
25 customers and with our communities even if there

1 may be individuals that disagree with parts of
2 those decisions.

3 Q. In your rebuttal testimony, page 10, line
4 6, we're talking about -- and this has been brought
5 up before so far in the hearing -- the historical
6 basis that's been used and the company takes issue
7 with. Has the company, do you know, provided any
8 actual results of its operations in 2013, such as
9 quarterly financial reports or semiannual reports,
10 to determine that its projected forecasts are in
11 line with actual operations in North Dakota?

12 A. Have we provided reports that report on --
13 what aspects in particular are you speaking of?

14 Q. I guess any sort of quarterly financial
15 reports to let us know where your projections are
16 versus where your actuals are for 2013.

17 A. Oh, a projection for 2013. I don't
18 believe we provided a projection for 2013. We have
19 provided -- once we have actuals after the end of
20 the calendar year, we provided data for 2012, I
21 believe, and before. And I may not be -- I'm not
22 aware of reports if we've filed any about our
23 financial -- projected financial performance for
24 2013.

25 Q. Is 2013 the test year that you're using?

1 A. Yes, it is. So in that respect our whole
2 rate case is a projection, so it's a projection
3 based upon certain assumptions.

4 Q. And you don't have anything throughout the
5 year that you're going to check those assumptions
6 against?

7 A. Well, we did revise our request, so our
8 original request was at a certain level with a
9 certain requested ROE and we did revise that to
10 reflect some changing market conditions, so a
11 different ROE and some changes in our revenue
12 requirement analysis which brought our request
13 down, so it's about an 8 percent request at this
14 point. I'm not sure exactly what you may be asking
15 of me beyond that.

16 Q. We're just wondering if you have any
17 actual numbers to help provide -- one of the
18 contentions is that we use historical -- we use a
19 three-year historical average. One of the reasons
20 for that is we don't have any actual numbers from
21 the company regarding where they're at in 2013.
22 It's all just a projection and there's nothing to
23 ground it. How would you respond to that?

24 A. I guess I would respond to that that using
25 projected expenses and projected revenues is the

1 basis and the standard for the test year here in
2 North Dakota and it has been how we've approached
3 it in our previous rate cases. And so beyond that
4 I think you'd have to ask one of our attorneys, I
5 guess.

6 Q. How does the company determine that the
7 forecasted data is accurate and reliable?

8 A. Okay. I think we put together a forecast
9 of what our expenses are and revenues and a lot
10 goes into that. There is, for example, a budget
11 system that says here's the costs that we need to
12 incur in 2013. And if I could just speak to that a
13 little bit.

14 All of the costs that come through that
15 are reflected in our 2013 case really result from a
16 very extensive set of planning and budgeting on
17 what projects need to be done. As a very
18 capital-intensive business, it's basically the core
19 of what we have to do because we have to manage so
20 much money because of the nature of our business.
21 The planning prioritization, executing of projects
22 is basically the core of what we do.

23 So part of our rate request in 2013 is
24 driven by investments on the resource planning side
25 or the resource side, in particular our nuclear

1 power plants, and we've spoken a lot about those.
2 Those investments were needed to extend the life
3 another 20 years. Those investments had to happen
4 now in order to get those license renewals. The
5 planning for that started several years ago and it
6 culminates then when the project work gets done,
7 which includes last year, this year, and even into
8 next year. So that's a big part of what our 2013
9 test year is.

10 Another part of it is spending in our
11 transmission and distribution part of our business.
12 The budgets for 2013 that are -- are created
13 starting from a process that begins with the
14 front-line people who manage the system, engineers,
15 operators, planners, whether in the distribution
16 side, the transmission side, or the power supply
17 side. They start by looking at where are there
18 problems or risks of safety, reliability, plant
19 performance, compliance with legal requirements or
20 regulatory requirements, and they develop proposed
21 projects to address those risks.

22 Our standard process internally is they
23 have to then develop data for all of those projects
24 that identify what's the driver, what's the risk,
25 what's the timing of the risk, what happens if you

1 don't do the project. And then from that a list of
2 proposed projects with all these screening criteria
3 are developed and it runs through several layers of
4 management, continuing a process of review,
5 evaluation and prioritization that ultimately says
6 here are the projects that we absolutely need to do
7 to fulfill our obligation for service to customers,
8 operate safely, meet legal and environmental and
9 regulatory requirements.

10 And then each business unit brings those
11 projects up and that's reviewed on a corporate
12 basis. So at a corporate level we're looking at
13 what does distribution think we need to do, how
14 much money, what are the criteria, transmission,
15 energy supply. A totality of a view is taken as to
16 are these the costs that we need to spend this
17 year. That's how we create a budget for a
18 particular year.

19 We also do five-year plans, so we do
20 year-by-year budgets and we're also doing sort of
21 rolling five-year plans so that we can see projects
22 that are going to be out in the future further than
23 this year. All of that is in our test year. All
24 of that is vetted to the fullest of our ability to
25 say this is what we need to do, here's why we need

1 to do it, here's the costs that we're going to be
2 managing to.

3 On the revenue side we put together a
4 forecast for what we think our customers' energy
5 use is going to be, and I think that we probably
6 have data even towards the middle of this year
7 where we can say here's where our forecast is,
8 here's what the actual is, are we forecasting well,
9 do we have a good process for forecasting
10 customers' energy growth.

11 So there's a lot that goes into putting
12 together that test year. I think your question
13 was, is there information that says, okay, now
14 we're halfway through the year, where are you
15 relative to that. I'm not familiar with that
16 information. I don't have that in front of me
17 here.

18 JUDGE FETCH: All right. We're going to
19 take a little break at this time. Mr. Norrell, do
20 you know how much longer you're going to be with
21 this witness?

22 MR. NORRELL: Probably only about five
23 more minutes, Your Honor.

24 JUDGE FETCH: Well, take a break and think
25 about it. We're going to take 15 minutes and we

1 will -- it is 10:35. We will resume at 10:50.

2 (Recess taken.)

3 JUDGE FETCH: We are back on the record
4 and it is about 10:52 a.m., Central Time. And at
5 this time we'll continue with questioning of Laura
6 McCarten by Ryan Norrell.

7 MR. NORRELL: Thank you, Your Honor.

8 Q. (MR. NORRELL CONTINUING) Ms. McCarten, I
9 just want to wrap up with a couple questions on
10 your testimony and you stated here today -- you've
11 talked a lot about the principles of ratemaking --
12 could you describe -- and principled ratemaking.
13 Could you describe what that means to the company,
14 principles and principled ratemaking?

15 A. I think it goes back to what we would call
16 the regulatory compact and what are the principles
17 of ratemaking that allow the company to recover
18 reasonable and prudently incurred costs that are
19 necessary to serve the customers, that also allow
20 the company the opportunity to earn a rate of
21 return that's adequate to attract capital that we
22 need to invest in our system, that strikes a
23 balance between the customers and the company that
24 provides the company the opportunity for sound
25 financial performance, that provides a stable

1 regulatory environment. So that again can help the
2 company perform in a financially healthy manner,
3 which ultimately is good for our customers.

4 Q. What are those principles based on? Are
5 there any metrics or any sort of -- what are they
6 based on?

7 A. So I think the principles start from sort
8 of the desired outcome of a regulatory compact.
9 They are carried through in state statute and we
10 referred to a couple of those that -- here in North
11 Dakota. They are built through Commission
12 decisions, precedent, experience, and certainly the
13 facts that tell you -- the facts that help guide
14 you into decisions that achieve those overarching
15 outcomes that I mentioned at the beginning.

16 Q. So these principles, if they're based on
17 state statutes, there are 50 different states, each
18 state is going to have a different set of statutes,
19 each commission is going to have a different set of
20 decisions, each company in each case is going to
21 have a different set of facts at hand. Do these
22 principles -- are they fluid or are they set in
23 stone, do they change over time?

24 A. It's my understanding that there's a lot
25 of commonality across the whole country in terms of

1 ratemaking principles, and I think that makes sense
2 given that for utilities such as ours that need to
3 access the capital market, there is one capital
4 market, so they don't really care what state you're
5 in, they're looking at is your company a good
6 investment. I believe there's a lot of commonality
7 that has been developed in terms of what principles
8 of ratemaking are that achieve that regulatory
9 compact. I believe there are some state-to-state
10 differences. I don't really know what all of those
11 are. But, yeah, I do believe there is a high
12 degree of commonality.

13 MR. NORRELL: Thank you, Your Honor. No
14 further questions for this witness.

15 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you, Mr. Norrell. Ms.
16 Jeffcoat-Sacco, do you have questions?

17 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: I have a few. I
18 won't say a couple because then it's always more
19 than two and then people comment on that. I have a
20 few.

21 I was going to ask exactly what Ryan asked
22 about what was the jurisdictional allocation prior
23 to the 12 CP and I will ask specifically that the
24 company file information to disclose that and the
25 date and maybe the order number, if possible, when

1 12 CP was approved by the Commission. Would that
2 be acceptable?

3 THE WITNESS: Yes.

4 JUDGE FETCH: Are you asking that to be a
5 late-filed exhibit, Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco?

6 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: I think that would be
7 appropriate.

8 JUDGE FETCH: Okay. Would you repeat that
9 once again?

10 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: The date, order
11 number -- the date and order number when the 12 CP
12 jurisdictional allocation was approved by the
13 Commission and, in addition, the allocation used
14 just prior to that.

15 JUDGE FETCH: All right. Thank you. And
16 we'll mark that as a late-filed exhibit for NSP.

17 Ms. Valley, do you already have all the
18 witness statements labeled, numbered?

19 MS. VALLEY: Thank you, Your Honor. No,
20 they are not already labeled.

21 JUDGE FETCH: Well, why don't we just call
22 this late-filed Exhibit A for NSP.

23 All right. Thank you. Ms.
24 Jeffcoat-Sacco, please proceed.

25

CROSS-EXAMINATION

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BY MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO:

Q. On page 5 of your rebuttal, I believe, you talk about -- and I think maybe a little before that you talk about working with staff to smooth certain costs and you talk a little bit in there about smoothing pension costs, and I just thought maybe you could give me the fourth-grade level explanation what you're talking about so I could understand it.

A. Yes. Certainly. In this test year we do have pension expenses that are a result of amortizing market losses in our pension fund that occurred in the 2008 economic downturn. We call this the 2008 market loss. What we're proposing is that this total amount that we would -- that we're proposing to collect in 2013 we could instead collect over several years, so the smoothing is to reduce the amount we collect in 2013 and then push off that collection into some future years so that we still collect the full amount, but it takes place over a longer period of time so each year the impact is less.

Q. You don't have a specific proposal for that filed, though, do you, at this time?

1 A. No.

2 Q. You're offering that as an option?

3 A. That's correct. We don't have a proposal
4 filed, but we are offering that as an option to
5 work with the Commission and staff on if that is of
6 interest.

7 Q. Are there other cost items that you are
8 offering that option -- offering to explore that
9 option or only the pension costs?

10 A. I believe that the smoothing mechanism
11 that I just described, we've just offered up for
12 the pension costs. If there are other costs that
13 the staff or Commission think that that would be an
14 appropriate treatment of, we would like to explore
15 that with you.

16 Q. This may end up being another late-filed
17 exhibit and I am basically asking for this from --
18 kind of from both sides, but can you give me a
19 simple list of your capital investment items that
20 have been brought up in this rate case -- that you
21 are asserting staff has brought up in this case
22 that you did not ask for recovery for but also that
23 have pending -- other cases pending? Can you give
24 me that list?

25 A. Yes, we can give you that list. And just

1 for the moment, let me try to answer that question,
2 but I think we want to file a specific exhibit for
3 that.

4 But for capital case -- for capital
5 request, I believe that it would encompass one of
6 the pending wind projects -- actually two pending
7 wind projects. Of the four projects that we're
8 proposing to secure, two would be through power
9 purchase agreements and the other two would be
10 projects that we would own.

11 Q. And give me the names -- the names that
12 we're going to be familiar with, you know, the
13 shorthand version we talk about when we talk about
14 these places, if you can.

15 A. Okay. Of the two wind projects that we
16 would propose to own, one of those is called Border
17 Winds, it's located here in North Dakota, and the
18 other -- let me just try to find my reference here.
19 I think it's the Pleasant Valley. But we'll make
20 sure that our exhibit has the correct designation
21 of which of those four projects are the two that we
22 would propose to own and thus would be capital
23 projects.

24 Q. Okay. And then you would give us the case
25 numbers --

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. -- associated with those? And also for
3 the two power purchase cases?

4 A. Okay. And I believe all of those are
5 advance determination of prudence cases that would
6 be -- those projects would be reviewed under.

7 Q. So there are four pending ADP cases for
8 four projects, two of which would be owned and two
9 of which would be power purchase?

10 A. Subject to getting the complete accurate
11 information, maybe I should just say let's get that
12 data filed so that I'm not confusing -- creating
13 confusion by saying something that's inaccurate
14 here.

15 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: Let's call that NSP
16 B, if that's okay.

17 JUDGE FETCH: Late-filed NSP B, and give
18 that a title, shorthand version, please, so that
19 when it comes in, we can identify what that is.

20 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: I would say pending
21 ADP cases.

22 JUDGE FETCH: ADP cases. Okay.

23 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: I want to say not
24 part of the rate case, but I don't want to say that
25 because I'm going to ask staff to tell me if, in

1 their opinion, there are parts of that in the rate
2 case. So pending ADP cases for which NSP has not
3 requested recovery in this rate case. Would that
4 be accurate?

5 THE WITNESS: I think that's accurate.

6 JUDGE FETCH: Has not requested recovery
7 in this rate case.

8 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: In 813, yeah.

9 JUDGE FETCH: Okay.

10 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: But I also would ask
11 staff then to respond -- I hope this doesn't
12 take -- it can be done before the hearing is closed
13 because I do want staff's response to that list.

14 THE WITNESS: I think we could probably do
15 that over the lunch hour. I'm looking at my
16 attorneys.

17 JUDGE FETCH: Well, then they probably
18 would not be late-filed exhibits.

19 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: That's true.

20 JUDGE FETCH: Let's not label the document
21 at this time or discuss admitting it. If you can
22 produce that, then we'll deal with it through the
23 hearing. What about the first document? Is that
24 going to be -- still be a late-filed Exhibit A?

25 THE WITNESS: I believe so. I think we

1 have to do some research on that, so --

2 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: And I think we can
3 still call them A and B. One will just have
4 late-filed in front of it and one won't.

5 JUDGE FETCH: Okay. Fine.

6 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: Will that work for
7 everybody since they're -- I'm asking for them,
8 they're not on either side?

9 JUDGE FETCH: Okay. Is there going to be
10 any objection to late-filed Exhibit A?

11 MR. NORRELL: No, Your Honor.

12 MS. VALLEY: No, Your Honor.

13 JUDGE FETCH: Okay. Late-filed Exhibit A
14 is admitted. And we'll deal with B when it comes
15 in. All right. Let's proceed.

16 COMMISSIONER KALK: Your Honor, if I could
17 just interject.

18 JUDGE FETCH: Yes, Chairman Kalk.

19 COMMISSIONER KALK: Illona, the Border
20 Winds, there's a decision to be made about
21 transferring it. Does that muddy these waters at
22 all here today, that you're concerned about that?
23 Jerry is shaking his head behind you so I just
24 wanted to ask that question because it may not even
25 go there. There's a series of decisions on Border

1 Winds that has to take place.

2 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: Right. With all due
3 respect, I was going to try to think through all
4 those related questions when I got the list --

5 COMMISSIONER KALK: Okay.

6 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: -- and I'm sure I
7 knew what I was talking about and then I had Jerry
8 and Pat to help me.

9 COMMISSIONER KALK: All right. Thank you.

10 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: So if we can
11 readdress it when the list comes, that would be
12 great.

13 COMMISSIONER KALK: Thank you, Your Honor.

14 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. All right. Ms.
15 Jeffcoat-Sacco.

16 Q. (MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO CONTINUING) I have a
17 question that relates back to when you were
18 discussing reassessing the cost benefit of the
19 investment, the Prairie Island, I believe, and
20 another one, and I understood what you were saying
21 about reassessing the benefits, you know, being
22 less and the costs being higher and deciding not to
23 move forward. Are you running an IRP to do that or
24 are you doing it to the extent that you do when you
25 do the initial running of an IRP to make those

1 choices to begin with, or are you just sitting at
2 your desk and thinking this is too high, this is
3 too low, this isn't enough?

4 A. So the IRP, the integrated resource plan,
5 is something that we do on a regular basis where we
6 look out over 15 years and we identify potential
7 projects to meet customers' needs, and then
8 following that we put together a specific
9 regulatory process and proposal for very specific
10 projects once we decide, yes, that project does
11 make sense.

12 So let's take the Prairie Island project,
13 for example. That began, you know, several years
14 ago through an IRP process and regulatory review
15 assessing is this a good project to do for our
16 customers. And based upon the information
17 available at the time, the answer was yes. As we
18 proceed with that project, as we do with all
19 projects, we're monitoring the cost, we're
20 comparing what we understand about where we are
21 today with the cost compared to what we thought at
22 the time, and because our resource planning process
23 is really an ongoing process that happens in our
24 business all the time, we're always aware of what
25 market conditions are changing, for example,

1 natural gas prices. We're also constantly
2 forecasting and updating our forecast of our
3 customers' needs out into the future.

4 So although we do big resource plan
5 filings maybe every three years, the whole concept
6 and the activities in resource planning is
7 something that happens on a regular basis in our
8 company. So as we proceeded with the Prairie
9 Island project in particular, we knew that our
10 customer demand was starting to drop out in the
11 future, we knew that prices of gas were coming
12 down, and we were at a point where we had to make a
13 decision to proceed to the next stage of the
14 Prairie Island project that would have been a
15 commitment of a big -- you know, a lot of money.
16 It was a critical decision point in that project.
17 And because of how we monitor and keep track of
18 major projects like this, we understood that that
19 was a time where we needed to take a step back and
20 say we need to look at how all these pieces are
21 working together and decide is this still in the
22 best interest of our customers.

23 So it wasn't precisely in a resource
24 planning process, but it was informed by all the
25 elements that happen on an ongoing basis as we look

1 at our resource, our customers' needs and decide
2 how best to meet those needs.

3 Q. So you're telling me that there's that
4 element of judgment based on your expertise in the
5 business, which that element exists when you first
6 do your -- run your IRPs also, does it not?

7 A. Yes, there is an element of judgment.
8 There's an element of -- certainly whenever you
9 make a decision today that's going to take five
10 years to put in place and then be in place for
11 another 20 or 40 years, you're trying to make the
12 best decision you can about projecting the future,
13 and you're looking at making a robust decision that
14 it's not good only if this narrow set of
15 circumstances occurs, but it's still good even if a
16 broad set of circumstances occurs. So you always
17 make the best decision you can, but things can
18 change, especially when projects take several years
19 from the point of, you know, going through the
20 initial review to actually executing them and then
21 proceeding with them. And so that's why it's also
22 prudent on an ongoing basis to keep abreast of what
23 are the conditions that might change, whether that
24 project continues to be of value to our customers
25 or whether there is some other project that would

1 be a greater value to the customers.

2 Q. So are you -- is it basically that the IRP
3 is really not worth that much to a company then? I
4 mean, are you doing it because the regulators
5 require it and not because you really want to use
6 it or need to use it? I'm trying to find that
7 tipping point between when you run them and when
8 you exercise the judgment, or is it always a
9 combination?

10 A. I think it is always a combination. I
11 think they're useful, because I think that they are
12 a useful -- an integrated resource plan presents a
13 view of the best information known at the time and
14 provides a guide to the direction that we believe
15 we need to go to serve our customers. We're also
16 going to continually correct that course when
17 circumstances tell us we need to, because it's not
18 a static world, and we need to provide -- we need
19 to do long-range planning that shows us the
20 direction and we also need to do sort of
21 year-by-year checks and corrections that are --
22 that circumstances tell us are better for our
23 customers. The -- so, yeah, I think we need both
24 that long-range planning and then we also are
25 always going to have sort of the day-to-day sort of

1 judgments and modifications that need to be made.

2 Q. When is the next one due? When will it be
3 filed?

4 A. I believe we're going to file an IRP in
5 the first quarter in 2014 -- early in 2014.
6 Whether it's the first quarter or the first half
7 I'm not exactly sure.

8 Q. And it's every three years or every two?

9 A. You know, that moves around. I think
10 generally it's about an every-three-year --
11 intended to be about an every-three-year process.

12 The one thing I will note is that over
13 these last few years, again in the wake of the
14 economic downturn in 2008, it threw a lot of plans
15 off for Xcel, for utilities across the country, as
16 a matter of fact, where we saw demand really drop
17 and then at the same time natural gas prices
18 dropped so precipitously, it was a game changer.
19 So these last few years there have been many things
20 that have caused, say, maybe more adjustments in
21 resource plans than if you looked out maybe five or
22 ten years ago.

23 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: I don't have any more
24 questions, but I do want to thank you for your
25 Exhibit LM-1 --

1 A. You're welcome.

2 Q. -- your compliance chart --

3 A. Oh, yes. Yes.

4 Q. -- which is invaluable, and if it had the
5 12 CP order in there, it would be perfect.

6 A. It goes back to 1992 so we have to go back
7 a little further, I guess.

8 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: Thanks.

9 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

10 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you, Ms.

11 Jeffcoat-Sacco.

12 At this time I'm going to turn to the
13 Commission, and any questions from Commissioner
14 Fedorchak?

15 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: I do.

16 **EXAMINATION**

17 **BY COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK:**

18 Q. I want to be respectful of the fact that
19 you're providing kind of the broad policy overview
20 and I won't try to dig into some of the specifics
21 on issues that are going to be addressed by future
22 witnesses. So speaking to some of the more broad
23 companywide decisions, I'm still having a hard time
24 getting my brain around how all this fits together.
25 There's an awful lot of talk about this is included

1 and this isn't included, so if you could -- if you
2 could help me understand.

3 We're talking here a lot about investments
4 that are being made, the company is saying, to
5 refresh and modernize the system. That makes me
6 believe that we're sort of preparing the system for
7 the future. Is that a correct assessment that this
8 rate case we're sort of preparing the system to
9 address future needs?

10 A. Commissioner, that's part of what we do
11 with refreshing and investing in our system.
12 Another big part is to make the investments to
13 change out equipment, whatever is necessary to
14 assure reliable service today and tomorrow.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. So it's addressing today's needs and as we
17 build and invest in that system, it will be there
18 to address the future needs as well.

19 Q. Okay. So in that view then, how should we
20 be looking at -- I can't separate the fact that we
21 have all these ADPs at our desk. I realize they
22 aren't part of this decision, but in terms of
23 understanding and so I can ultimately explain to
24 people who will ask me, so how long is this rate
25 good, this new rate, how long is this good for, why

1 are we doing it. I want to better understand how
2 you're positioning the company to address the needs
3 and for how long. And then if you could in that
4 perspective also just explain how these next ones
5 that we're going to be dealing with fit into the --
6 sort of the big plan.

7 A. Okay. So for the first question is, you
8 know, how long are these decisions that we make in
9 this rate case sort of going to be affecting
10 customers, and I'll go back to the fact that we are
11 in sort of a peak in the need for investment into
12 our system. The nuclear power plants being the
13 perfect example of that, that investment has to
14 happen in this period in order to keep those plants
15 operating for another 20 years, so money that's
16 spent now will continue to provide that value.

17 Part of what's driving this peak in our
18 investment needs is the need to build out the
19 regional transmission system as well. We hadn't
20 invested significantly into our regional
21 transmission system, the high-voltage system that
22 connects all the states together -- the last
23 significant level of investment was in the early
24 '70s and a lot has happened since then and we need
25 to invest in that high-voltage system in order to

1 maintain regional reliability and address local
2 reliability issues. So those are two major drivers
3 of this peak in investment that's happening in
4 these few years.

5 And as I said before, I recognize and
6 appreciate the concern that's been expressed about,
7 you know, the impact on customers as this is
8 happening. But I think that one of the options
9 that we have proposed for this case is to deal with
10 this general rate case, which deals with, you know,
11 the complete picture of all of our rates, all of
12 our cost, how rates are structured, and then look
13 in 2014 when these investments that I mentioned
14 continue to have new cost to finalize these
15 projects that are going to come up in 2014, we've
16 proposed that rather than coming in with a full
17 general rate case such as this is, if we could
18 agree on something like a capital step that would
19 allow us to increase our rates in 2014 to recover
20 the cost of a well-defined set of known capital
21 projects, and this would essentially be the
22 continuation of the nuclear power plant investment,
23 that part of that cost is happening this year. If
24 we could agree on something like that and if we
25 could agree on the transmission cost recovery

1 rider, which would deal with that big chunk of
2 known investment in the high-voltage transmission
3 system, those two things, there would be a rate
4 impact in 2014, it wouldn't be the complete rate
5 impact that we'd be looking at if we brought in a
6 complete general case such as this is, but we think
7 if we structure that correctly, we could stay out
8 of a general rate increase -- rate proceeding in
9 2014 and, instead, have very well-defined projects
10 with an opportunity for the Commission to
11 understand exactly what those projects are and
12 approve -- to the cost of then what can flow
13 through to customers in 2014.

14 So I think that is an approach that it's
15 still a cost increase because we are still facing
16 those cost increases to our business all driven by
17 needs to serve our customers, but it would provide
18 more predictability to customers of what they can
19 expect in 2014. It would reduce the resources of
20 the Commission and the company because that would
21 be a much more condensed regulatory proceeding than
22 this full rate case is. So that's an example, I
23 think, of how we could, you know, address what are
24 true needs of our business in a way that I think is
25 helpful to customers.

1 Q. So you described two big investment areas,
2 the nuclear uprates and the transmission --

3 A. Correct.

4 Q. -- for this rate case. So that leaves out
5 a whole bunch of other generation issues that we
6 have kind of forthcoming probably perhaps, and so
7 how much does this rate case deal with positioning
8 the company to meet future load demand in terms of
9 generation?

10 A. Okay. So this rate case includes costs
11 that maintain our nuclear power plant, so, in other
12 words, we keep those plants running so we don't
13 have to go out and buy something else, which is
14 what we would have to do if they were shut down.
15 By the way, our nuclear power plants combined serve
16 about 30 percent of our customers' energy needs, so
17 it's hugely significant. So the costs that are in
18 this case do that -- or part of the costs that do
19 that. It's also paying for increased power output
20 from our Monticello plant, so that helps to meet
21 our customers' future needs. And I think those --
22 there are some other investments that are in our
23 existing power plants that are not of the magnitude
24 of investments in the nuclear power plant, but this
25 rate case does include some costs that are ongoing

1 investments in some of our other plants.

2 Q. Do you feel that after this the company
3 will be positioned to meet the future load, or are
4 we going to be seeing additional investments in
5 generation facilities in the future?

6 A. Okay. The total cost of the investments
7 in the nuclear power plants, that cost doesn't all
8 happen in one year, so some of that will continue
9 into next year, so that's a continuation in
10 concluding those investments.

11 We also have proposed a -- what we call a
12 simple cycle natural gas power plant to meet what
13 we'd call more or less peaking needs out in the
14 2018 time frame. Peaking needs are when our --
15 well, like days today, when our customer need for
16 energy is at its highest and you need power plants
17 that you can turn on and they'll be there and they
18 serve that last slice of energy need that the
19 customers have. And they don't run that often
20 during the year because most of the time our
21 customers' demand is not up at this level, it's
22 down here.

23 We have a proposal to bring on a new
24 resource, I believe it's up to 400 megawatts -- I
25 need to double-check that -- in the 2018 time frame

1 and we do have, I believe, an ADP that's pending
2 before the Commission here regarding two of the
3 projects that we've identified that could
4 potentially serve that need, and those are some gas
5 peaking plants here in the state.

6 So in terms of new need, that peaking need
7 out in the 2018 time frame, there are pending
8 projects that are not part of this rate case that
9 are pointed at serving that need.

10 We've also talked about the wind projects,
11 and we've got four of those that again aren't part
12 of this rate case, but they would be under review.
13 Those do not serve a need like those peaking
14 plants. They're not the things you turn on when
15 you need them, when you're getting that top slice
16 of customer need on really hot days. Those are
17 really more like a fuel, and by having those wind
18 contracts and owning those wind projects, we can
19 reduce our customers' costs because the cost of
20 those wind projects are so cost competitive,
21 they're less than what we project energy from other
22 sources would be. So when we have them, we take
23 the wind when it's running and when it's there, and
24 when we're taking that wind, we're not having to
25 buy more expensive power so the net to our

1 customers is lower costs.

2 Q. Okay. So the best way to characterize
3 this -- what we're doing with this rate case is
4 that we're addressing some baseload generation and
5 transmission positioning and there will be some
6 future additional investments needed to meet load?
7 So I don't want customers thinking like this is it,
8 because it isn't it, we know that it isn't it, and
9 it may not even be a peak in investment as we're
10 saying here because we don't really know how much
11 those future investments are going to be, so I just
12 want to have the correct understanding kind of
13 going into what we're doing here and not misleading
14 people into thinking that, yes, you can swallow a 9
15 percent increase today but it's going to be your
16 last one, because it probably isn't. Is that kind
17 of a correct evaluation on my part?

18 A. I think that's correct, Commissioner. We
19 do know that completing the nuclear investments and
20 the transmission investments will entail
21 significant revenue requirement needs in the next
22 couple of years, and then I can't say what the
23 future holds beyond that.

24 Q. Mm-hmm. Okay. So with that
25 understanding, a few more questions. You spoke

1 earlier about the consequences of not making these
2 investments being more difficult for customers than
3 the benefits of making them. Can you tell me what
4 some of those consequences are?

5 A. Sure. I think the -- I keep coming back
6 to the nuclear because it is such a big driver of
7 this case and it presents such a stark and good
8 example to answer your question. If we didn't make
9 the investments in these nuclear power plants, then
10 we would have had to shut them down, they would no
11 longer be operating, they're baseload power plants
12 which run 24/7 generally for 18- to 24-month
13 stretches between refueling. We would have to shut
14 them down, and that's 30 percent of our customer
15 energy needs coming from that. We would have to go
16 and secure brand-new power sources, new power
17 plants, new contracts, something that we could rely
18 on to be there 24/7, that baseload power. So that
19 would be more expensive to do that than the
20 investments we're making to keep those power plants
21 operating and those investments and the cost of
22 them are hitting us today.

23 We also have the fact that because they
24 are not a fossil-fueled energy source, there is a
25 risk mitigation that we have in our energy

1 portfolio by having 30 percent of our energy coming
2 from nuclear, those power plants are not going to
3 be subject to future environmental regulation and
4 whatever that cost may be. So that's part of how I
5 think we are positioning ourselves with our energy
6 portfolio to provide good cost today and great
7 value into the future with some of these risk
8 mitigation features.

9 Q. Now, if we could talk just for a minute
10 about wind and its role in all of this. The wind
11 that you're bringing on is low cost, the company
12 has said -- extremely low cost and so it's
13 displacing other higher-cost generation sources.
14 Tell me about what those are. It's hard for me to
15 understand how the company deals with the
16 variability of wind if you're displacing a baseload
17 -- a baseload generation facility with it.

18 A. Okay. And I'm going to try to answer that
19 at a high level, and I would also encourage you to
20 ask the question of our expert on that, Steve
21 Wishart. But when wind is in our portfolio --
22 well, first of all, I would note that we -- over
23 the course of a year a lot of the energy that we
24 secure to serve our customers we purchase from
25 other sources, so we're in the Midwest Independent

1 System Operator system, it's a market for buying
2 energy. And over the course of a year we buy a lot
3 of energy, we're kind of in there looking for good
4 buys and we don't have -- own enough of our own
5 energy sources to meet all of our customers' needs.
6 We rely on that.

7 Q. Do you know what percent you're buying of
8 your total?

9 A. I don't know, but I think with one of our
10 future witnesses we can get that.

11 Q. Rough estimate, is it like 10 percent?

12 A. Roughly I think it's around maybe the 5 to
13 10 percent on a typical year-over-year basis, some
14 years maybe more. With the outage at Sherco it was
15 more in 2013 and 2012.

16 So we take the wind when it's blowing, and
17 that means we could perhaps not purchase something
18 or we can back off on some of our gas- or
19 coal-fired power plants. It really all happens
20 according to the relative cost. It's sort of the
21 dispatching decision that happens that says if you
22 have this much wind coming in at this time because
23 the wind is blowing, what's the most -- what's the
24 next most expensive energy resource that it will
25 displace and then you stop that, you stop buying

1 it, you stop operating that plant, so that you're
2 still meeting your customers' energy needs, but
3 because the wind has come in, it's pushed off
4 whatever that next higher price is, because we
5 operate based upon what we call economic dispatch,
6 generally is what's the least expensive power
7 source to serve our customers.

8 Q. All right. Backing up kind of as a
9 followup to the earlier questions where you talk
10 about the resource investments being made in this
11 case. What percent of the revenue requirement that
12 the company is seeking is -- boils down to those
13 two things that you mentioned, the nuclear and the
14 regional transmission investments? The main things
15 that are driving this rate case, what percent of
16 the total revenue requirement is coming from those
17 things? It doesn't have to be exact. I know I
18 read it at some point, but I can't recall where I
19 saw that.

20 A. You know, Commissioner, I guess I'd like
21 my lawyers to help direct me. I think I had a
22 chart in my original testimony that showed the
23 contribution of the drivers, but since we've
24 revised our request down from 16. -- from the
25 original request down to 14.9, I don't know whether

1 that percentage has changed. So I think it's more
2 than half.

3 Q. Well, if a future witness can discuss
4 that, that would be helpful.

5 A. Okay.

6 Q. Okay. So then with the remaining issues,
7 talk to me about what the company is doing to be as
8 aggressive as possible in minimizing cost. I'm
9 going to give you the investments in the generation
10 and the transmission, say they're all good for the
11 sake of this discussion. What is NSP-Minnesota
12 doing to be really aggressive in cutting costs and
13 living frugally so the customers aren't bearing
14 additional costs beyond what they really need for
15 their energy?

16 A. Sure. I think that that happens kind of
17 across the business, and I'll try to give you some
18 examples of that. In our labor cost, for example,
19 we are -- whether it's union or nonunion, we are
20 looking to always compare ourselves to market and
21 not to be over market when we look at what our
22 compensation packages are and benefits packages.
23 So we always try to say we are here at market so we
24 can attract people, but we're not overspending in
25 that regard.

1 When we look at our -- what we call our
2 supply chain part of our business, the whole part
3 of the business of buying equipment, services, over
4 the last couple of years we've gone through a real
5 extensive review and restructuring of that so that
6 we have fewer suppliers, we're leveraging cost
7 savings across all four of our operating companies,
8 so we don't just look at our NSP-Minnesota needs,
9 we look at our NSP-Minnesota, Public Service
10 Colorado, Southwestern Public Service and say by
11 buying in bulk, how can we get better prices, how
12 can we secure a better position in manufacturing
13 slots. And we've seen a lot of savings come
14 through to us in that.

15 I think that we have -- in some of the
16 investments that we've made, say, here in the
17 state, we did something called an IntelliTeam
18 switch installation. This is something that's even
19 a type of a smart grid. It allows us to
20 understand -- and this is in downtown Fargo --
21 where outages are occurring to sectionalize and
22 basically cut off all the areas that aren't
23 affected by the outage so that they're back in
24 service immediately and know exactly where that
25 outage is so we can send repair trucks right to it

1 so there's efficiency in how we do our business.

2 We have done efforts to consolidate
3 departments so that they're providing service
4 across all of the operating companies and only a
5 share of their costs come to NSP-Minnesota. We do
6 that with technical services as well so that we
7 don't have people kind of waiting for something to
8 happen, but they're able to serve a larger
9 footprint and so you have on a per-state cost less
10 cost associated with that.

11 We're pursuing things called -- through
12 technology just to gain more efficient operation
13 to again direct resources where they need to be and
14 get them right to that.

15 And another big piece of what we're doing
16 is we're looking at more preventative maintenance
17 as an approach to managing our system so that we
18 can, rather than deal with the problem once it's
19 happened, which is always more costly, we're -- and
20 I would direct also to talk about this with our
21 witness Steve Foss. We are doing more preventative
22 maintenance that again lowers overall cost for our
23 customers, lowers cost of the business.

24 Q. So if we provided a tour of your
25 operations to, say, a fixed-income customer or a

1 business customer who is going to be faced with a
2 significant rate increase, are you comfortable that
3 you could demonstrate that the company is operating
4 in a lean way as much as you possibly can?

5 A. Yes, Commissioner, I think so. In fact,
6 even in this Commission we had some conversation
7 back and forth about what's the proper staffing
8 level, so we always are asking ourselves that and
9 trying to implement lessons learned, best practices
10 that allow us to reduce cost. In fact, if you
11 would ever come to our High Bridge plant, which is
12 in downtown Minneapolis, it was an old coal plant
13 that we converted to natural gas and increased the
14 output of, very cost-effective because we were able
15 to use all the existing substation and transmission
16 interconnections and retain that plant site, but
17 actually get a lot more power. You'll see things
18 like how they're managing the distribution of, we
19 call them, consumables, gloves and little things
20 that people in the power plant use every day, and
21 there's actually vending machines now and every
22 employee has basically a type of credit card and
23 they have to swipe it to get everything they need.
24 It works easy. It's brought the cost way down.
25 Things -- we're keeping very good track -- I mean,

1 that's just a very small example -- but very good
2 track of where those -- who is using that and what
3 the costs are and we've seen that the overall costs
4 that's been in on that come way down. So we are
5 looking for opportunities like that.

6 Q. Okay. I think I just have one more
7 question, and that is, you mentioned the interest
8 in consumers of having clean energy, and I agree, I
9 think that you can make a general statement like
10 that. I do, however, wonder, and I think there's a
11 lot of -- especially in a state like North Dakota,
12 we don't have a mandate for renewable energy, and I
13 wonder if your company has done any surveying of
14 customers to find out their interest level and
15 tolerance for paying more money for renewable
16 energy, paying higher rates in exchange for
17 renewable energy. We can say these things, but do
18 we know that to be true?

19 A. Sure. Actually we have done some customer
20 surveys, and what we found is that customers, first
21 of all, want reliable energy, they, second of all,
22 want affordable energy, and then they want clean
23 energy. But how much more are they willing to pay
24 for it? Not much. It's, you know, a few percent.
25 So I think that we've always -- that's always

1 guided us that those are the fundamental table
2 stakes, reliable, safe, affordable energy, and we
3 believe that we've also been able to achieve a very
4 clean energy mix while keeping all of those things
5 in play. So cost is always a very important factor
6 to us whenever we make a resource decision for
7 renewable energy or otherwise.

8 Q. As an aside, not as an official exhibit, I
9 would be interested in any survey results that the
10 company has for North Dakota customers in terms of
11 their willingness to pay more money for cleaner
12 energy, just as -- to inform myself.

13 A. Okay. And I'm not sure that we have that
14 data for North Dakota customers. We have a variety
15 of data on what our customers tell us that we could
16 get you right now. And we could look at doing
17 something that gets the information that you're
18 asking for here.

19 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Great. That's
20 all of my questions for now, Judge.

21 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you, Commissioner
22 Fedorchak. Right down the line, Commissioner Kalk.

23 COMMISSIONER KALK: Thank you, Your Honor.
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EXAMINATION

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BY COMMISSIONER KALK:

Q. Thank you, Laura, for your testimony today. You've been there for what, a couple hours up there now?

A. Has it been?

Q. I appreciate it. I really mean that. I think it's important that it sends the right signal. I think, speaking for myself, that you're one of the VPs, you come out there and you kick off the rate case and you do your best to answer all the questions and you've got all the detail witnesses coming, but I think it's important that you come out here, and I appreciate it, because there's been rate cases we've had where the senior people don't show up. I think that you being here right away sends the right sign, so I appreciate you coming out here. And you are subject to all the questions first out of the chute that I think the attorneys will clean up as we go down the line.

But I do have just a couple -- you know, you and I have -- I think you became the VP in 2008, about the same time I got here, so we've spent a lot of time together in rate cases from, you talked about, those team switches and cleaning

1 up bills, so it's not uncommon ground that you and
2 I are going through.

3 But going through your experience, you
4 didn't go through it because we're trying to save
5 some time, but, I mean, you've been with Xcel for
6 many years. You started out --

7 A. Thirty-four years.

8 Q. I didn't say that.

9 A. Okay. That's all right. It's a fact.
10 I'm under oath.

11 Q. But you started out as a -- you're a
12 nuclear engineer by trade?

13 A. Correct.

14 Q. You've worked with regulatory affairs,
15 you've been a general manager at the regional
16 level, you've done with community involvement,
17 regional transmission, and now you're the VP, so
18 you've pretty much managed everything that you're
19 in charge of now from different viewpoints. So in
20 your view over the last 30 years, how much have
21 investor-owned utilities changed in how they
22 operate?

23 A. In my view, I think that we've gotten
24 tighter and tighter on managing our costs and doing
25 long-term planning and making sure that that

1 long-term planning is well informed and that we can
2 also adjust it, but I do think that over the years
3 we are a much leaner organization. Part of that is
4 due to taking advantage of technology like any
5 business does. Part of it has come from some
6 consolidation where we have, for example, a
7 centralized call center or a centralized human
8 resources function that, you know, can share its --
9 it can serve multiple operating companies. I think
10 that's a big piece of it.

11 I think a big piece of it also is that we
12 have moved more towards a diverse energy portfolio
13 because of the risks associated with environmental
14 regulation, with energy supplies, the variety of
15 energy supplies. We've always been a nuclear
16 company speaking for NSP, and that has served us
17 really well and it has -- we've been through some
18 ups and downs of how popular nuclear is, and right
19 now the value of nuclear in terms of being a
20 baseload resource that's cost-effective, that also
21 provides a hedge against future environmental
22 regulation, I think, is something that has -- is a
23 good position for us.

24 So I think in 30 years we have gotten
25 tighter, we've gotten -- our business has gotten

1 more complex because of some of these external
2 factors that affect the decisions we make and
3 affect those decisions over 40-year time periods,
4 so I think we've had to get better at working with
5 stakeholders and our approach to risk management.

6 Q. I appreciate your thoughts. To further a
7 little bit, when you started, were you trying to
8 satisfy as many jurisdictions as you're trying to
9 satisfy now?

10 A. Well, for NSP-Minnesota, yes, we served
11 North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota. And now,
12 since 2000, we are an operating company that's part
13 of a larger holding company. Xcel Energy is the
14 holding company. We are one operating company.
15 But we still -- our ability to operate well as a
16 company or as a -- as a company comes right back to
17 the state jurisdiction and the decisions of the
18 regulatory bodies in those states.

19 Q. So as those state policies continue to
20 become farther apart, whose state policies win?

21 A. Well, I think what we're going to continue
22 to try to do, and I think we've tried to do to this
23 date, is to work with all of those states that we
24 serve and try to find outcomes that serve the
25 interest of our customers in the best fashion

1 possible.

2 Q. I think that -- that becomes, I think, the
3 center point of a lot of our discussion in this
4 case because, you know -- I was part of the
5 Commission who gave the ADP for the nuclear. I
6 have no concerns about that as far as the project.
7 The CapX, I don't have any concerns on that. I
8 mean, I do for the cost, but I think that to me
9 becomes the fundamental challenge that do the
10 regulatory bodies as they sit now -- are they
11 organized to meet the needs of the changing
12 industrial and utility makeup. That's a question
13 that we have discussion on all the time.

14 A. Mm-hmm.

15 Q. And so I think that -- you talked about
16 earlier with setting up capital steps to do things
17 different for some of the transmission tariff,
18 looking at maybe we do things different. So if
19 we're going to look at doing things different
20 there, we can't go back to how we did things 30
21 years ago in investor-owned utilities because we
22 might need to change. So I think that's an
23 argument I don't give up right off the bat that
24 just because the Commission did something in '81 or
25 '92 or 2007 doesn't mean now is not the time to

1 change it. So that's where I look forward to even
2 more discussion about that, but I'll put that right
3 out front.

4 I think we have different viewpoints from
5 the states and when -- to put the finest point on
6 it is Commissioner Fedorchak started a line of
7 discussion about growing -- meeting different
8 mandates from different states. Well, I would say
9 that Xcel Energy is in violation of North Dakota's
10 goal. Our goal is 10 percent renewable, 90 percent
11 traditional, so by having more than 10 percent
12 you're no longer meeting the North Dakota goal of
13 90 percent baseload fossil fuels. I mean, it's a
14 completely different way to look at it, but that's
15 the way the constituents that I talk to would look
16 at this.

17 So I think that going forward -- I know
18 part of this is you're going to go back and talk to
19 your counterparts there, if you will, but we are
20 really going to set some tone with this rate case
21 as we go forward because I think that we're going
22 to see rate cases from Xcel every next couple years
23 just the build-out cycle we're in. So I didn't
24 mean to lecture like this, but I just put it out
25 there because it sets the -- where I think I'm

1 going with some of my discussions.

2 A couple points I just wanted to get your
3 thoughts on. Return on equity is going to be a big
4 discussion plan on this. I think that 10 percent
5 return on equity is -- it seems like a lot to me
6 with the advent of advance determination of
7 prudence where the companies have lobbied hard that
8 by coming in and requesting an ADP, it gives them
9 lower rate of capital, it gives them more certainty
10 as they go towards their potential investors, it
11 takes away a lot of the questions. So if you're
12 not coming in for ADP, it seems to me a higher
13 return on equity is reasonable. If you're coming
14 in for ADP and everything, you could get by with a
15 lower return on equity. I would be curious to hear
16 your thoughts on that comment.

17 A. Well, Commissioner, you're right. The
18 return on equity is always a very interesting
19 discussion and I think that what we have proposed
20 for the return on equity here, what we've
21 requested, which we've revised downward to 10.25,
22 does consider the fact that we do have ADPs in this
23 state, but still is grounded in what does the
24 investment community need to see to, you know, make
25 this an attractive and reasonable, competitive

1 investment.

2 Q. So you're saying that if you didn't have
3 ADP, you would be asking for even a higher ROE?

4 A. I don't know. I don't know that answer.
5 I guess that would be a good question to put to our
6 expert witness on that.

7 Q. And we'll get to that too, Laura. You've
8 been talking a long time. Let's see here. I will
9 have some concerns for future witnesses about the
10 costs of some of the upgrades to the nuclear plant
11 and some of those things.

12 Tell me how a shareholder -- if the
13 company Xcel spends more than they planned on, does
14 the shareholder ever come back and pony up some of
15 that money or does it all go to ratepayers?

16 A. Well, if it's a legitimate cost of doing
17 business and it's prudent, then by definition it is
18 a cost that gets included in rates.

19 Q. What if it's mismanagement? What if this
20 Commission deems that the costs above \$10 are not
21 prudent and we don't allow them? You can appeal
22 it, of course, but if you don't, then as opposed to
23 the stranded investment, to go back to the
24 shareholders and say, listen, pony up?

25 A. I think that's sort of what would happen

1 and that the shareholders would basically get a
2 lower rate of return because you would have --

3 Q. So it's not a stranded investment then?
4 There is a way to perhaps recover that?

5 A. Well, I think -- now you might be getting
6 me out of my element, but I think that we -- if
7 it's spent, it's spent.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. And then the question is in the course of
10 a year you have all these outlays of --

11 Q. Sure.

12 A. -- things that you're spending to run the
13 business, you have revenue that's coming in, you
14 put it all together and you say ultimately what
15 does this mean in terms of the return on equity,
16 the actual return earned in that year. To the
17 extent that our rates don't allow us to recover all
18 the costs we incur for whatever reason, either for
19 a judgment that that wasn't appropriate or other
20 costs came up, then that does degrade the actual
21 return that's earned in that jurisdiction.

22 Q. Fair enough. Okay. And the last one,
23 just for -- there's a question about how much
24 employees are getting compensated, and I think that
25 will flesh itself out, but I haven't heard about

1 the concerns about pension bombs, for lack of a
2 better term. How much time would you spend in your
3 position talking about the pensions that are going
4 to be paid to Xcel employees, NSP employees as they
5 retire, and people are living longer, they've got
6 good programs in place? We've seen companies go
7 bankrupt because they don't have good pension
8 plans. How much have you looked at that?

9 A. I personally, Commissioner, haven't looked
10 at that, but I would say that it's a --

11 Q. Is there a future witness that can talk
12 about it?

13 A. There is a future witness, yes.

14 Q. Maybe if that's not part of your testimony
15 to talk about how you're -- give us some confidence
16 that you've included the right cost formulas for
17 pensions so we're not going to have some big
18 pension flare-up 15 years from now to pay for Xcel
19 retirees.

20 A. Yeah. And I think that goes back to our
21 -- you know, how we fund our pension program and
22 that we have obligations to fund that fully.
23 That's part of one of the cost drivers for this
24 case, so I believe --

25 Q. Maybe that needs to change, how you fund

1 some of those down the road too.

2 A. No. No. It has to do with the market
3 downturn that happened in 2008 and the --
4 amortizing the impact of that downturn is
5 continuing out over time and it's part of the cost
6 for 2013.

7 COMMISSIONER KALK: Thank you very much,
8 Laura.

9 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you, Commissioner
10 Kalk. Commissioner Christmann.

11 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Thank you, Your
12 Honor.

13 **EXAMINATION**

14 **BY COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN:**

15 Q. And, Ms. McCarten, if some of these are
16 best left for someone else, just deflect them, but
17 tell me who to ask. Okay?

18 Picking up with where Commissioner Kalk
19 left off on the pension funds, if the losses from
20 2008 and that rough time frame need to be amortized
21 out, that tells me it's a defined benefit pension
22 plan?

23 A. I'm not certain.

24 Q. Because I'm assuming if it was otherwise,
25 that people would just end up with smaller pension.

1 A. I think you're correct. We'll have to
2 come back and make sure we give you correct
3 information on that.

4 Q. Can you tell me when the markets were
5 booming in the previous years, 10, 15, 20 years
6 ago, was all the money then that was in excess of
7 what a person would normally expect markets to
8 produce put into the pension plan, or was some of
9 it returned to the ratepayers?

10 A. Commissioner, my understanding is that
11 in -- several years ago when the market was very
12 strong, our earnings on our pension fund, they
13 actually reduced the pension expense that we then
14 sought to recover from our customers. So by being
15 in the market in the years when the market was
16 performing strongly, that reduced costs to our
17 customers because it offset the pension expense.

18 Q. Then moving to charitable and economic
19 development contributions that were discussed
20 earlier. Do you have any kind of a chart or a
21 graph or even just a mental summary of how -- and
22 tell me if these are different from each other --
23 how charitable and economic development
24 contributing has grown or shrunk as part of the
25 size of the company. Is that something you do more

1 of or less of or about the same over 10, 20, 30
2 years?

3 A. I think we've generally held that pretty
4 constant over the last five years or so. We might
5 have made a few contractions, but overall I think
6 we're at a comparable level in --

7 Q. I would like to know a longer time frame,
8 though, at least 20, maybe 30 years.

9 A. Okay. So to make sure I understand, would
10 you like information that shows our total dollar
11 amount of charitable contributions and economic
12 development contributions in North Dakota over a
13 20-year period, kind of year by year?

14 Q. That would be good. It seems like it
15 ought to be -- I'm assuming it's based somewhat on
16 company revenues or something. If the company
17 tripled in size, then I would assume that kind of
18 giving would maybe triple as well.

19 A. No, I'm certain that it hasn't. It
20 doesn't follow that sort of a pattern. It's pretty
21 constant and has been pretty constant over the last
22 several years. It doesn't grow -- for example, in
23 a given year if we have really hot weather, our
24 revenues will be much higher than, say, a year that
25 has typical weather. We don't do more charitable

1 contributions in that year because of that revenue
2 spike.

3 Q. How do you divide between North Dakota and
4 Minnesota?

5 A. You know, what we do there is we kind of
6 look at what our total customer base is and try to
7 do it proportionally, so that if North Dakota is 5
8 percent or 10 percent of the size of Minnesota,
9 then we have a proportional amount of spending on
10 charitable contributions, roughly speaking.

11 Q. And in your decisionmaking on who to give
12 money, is it encouraged or discouraged whether an
13 entity does lobbying?

14 A. So, for example, if I understand your
15 question, would we decide whether or not to give
16 money to -- would whether a company does lobbying
17 be a factor influencing whether or not we would
18 give them money?

19 Q. Correct.

20 A. For nonprofits I don't think that comes
21 into effect. I think for -- I think an economic
22 development, I think -- I don't know that we say if
23 there's lobbying, we don't provide funds, because
24 for economic development a lot of those
25 organizations do need to participate in the

1 political arena to get support for things, so I
2 think some of the funding that we do particularly
3 in economic development is to companies that could
4 do lobbying.

5 Q. I think it's almost probably more of an
6 issue with charitable groups that then lobby for or
7 against certain things.

8 A. You know, what we use to guide us is what
9 are the community needs, what's the strength of the
10 organization, are they a well-run organization, do
11 they provide the services that our customers need,
12 and basically try to use that as our guide.

13 Q. Okay.

14 JUDGE FETCH: Commissioner, did you want a
15 late-filed exhibit on that?

16 Q. (COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN CONTINUING)
17 Well, I would like something that would show over a
18 longer period of time than five years, 20 or 30
19 years, the growth in each of those types of
20 contributions.

21 A. Okay. So total dollar contribution in
22 charitable and economic development over maybe like
23 a 10-year period.

24 Q. Can we do 20 or 30? Is that a --

25 A. You know, I think we could probably do 20.

1 I'm going to look at Mark Nisbet because he's the
2 guy that manages that. I don't know if our records
3 go back 20 years. We'll go back as far as we have
4 records.

5 Q. Perfect. Thank you.

6 A. Okay.

7 JUDGE FETCH: All right. And we'll mark
8 that Exhibit C.

9 THE WITNESS: And that will definitely be
10 a late-filed because we will need to go back
11 through.

12 JUDGE FETCH: All right. And is there any
13 objection to that being admitted then?

14 MR. NORRELL: No, Your Honor.

15 JUDGE FETCH: All right. Exhibit C
16 late-filed, will be admitted. Thank you.

17 Q. (COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN CONTINUING) Then
18 the last line of questions I had, Your Honor, has
19 to do with the combined cycle gas plant that's not
20 being built. And I didn't write it down. Is it
21 Black Dog?

22 A. Black Dog.

23 Q. Did I understand you right, primarily that
24 was planned and developed years ago expecting a
25 certain amount of growth needs and with the

1 economic cycle that hit in '08 and that time frame
2 it just wasn't necessary?

3 A. Commissioner, essentially that's correct.
4 I forget the exact time frame of when we developed
5 that concept and when we proposed it and when we
6 actually pulled the plug. But the fundamental
7 reason why we changed direction on that and decided
8 that it was no longer a good value for our
9 customers was because our projection of the nature
10 of our customers' future needs changed.

11 The combined cycle is a power plant that
12 costs more to build, it costs less to run and you
13 run it more. But if you don't have that type of
14 need for your customers, it could be more
15 cost-effective to build a simple cycle that runs
16 less and costs less to build. So it was that sort
17 of evaluation of what our customers' future needs
18 were and the cost of that project that ultimately
19 led us to conclude that it wasn't necessary and in
20 the best interests of our customers.

21 Q. So that move away from more of a baseload
22 power and the move to shut down some coal plants
23 and add the amount of wind you've added, which is
24 again a shift from purely baseload to a more
25 variable power source, is part of certainly a big

1 pattern, and you had talked earlier about when the
2 wind is blowing or the sun is shining in the case
3 of solar, it allows you then to either purchase
4 less power off the grid or lower the amount you're
5 taking from gas or coal. Is nuclear similar to
6 coal in its ability to ramp the plant up and down?
7 I know coal is like a big ship, it's hard to ramp
8 it up and down quickly. Is nuclear about similar?

9 A. We don't ramp our nuclear power plants up
10 and down. They are not designed to be ramped up
11 and down. Once we finish a refueling outage, we
12 bring them up to power, we operate them at full
13 power until our next refueling outage essentially.

14 Our coal plants, over the last several
15 years we've learned how to operate them in a way
16 that we can do more ramping, but there are limits
17 on that as well that we observed. And then the
18 other power plants that you mentioned, we took two
19 old coal-fired power plants -- they were very old,
20 they were in downtown Minneapolis, downtown St.
21 Paul. To keep them operating they would have
22 required significant investment. Those were ones
23 we converted to natural gas fueled. We built power
24 plants that could generate even more power. Those
25 are combined cycle and those we can actually use

1 more than -- they're a great resource that we can
2 use more or less as we need to and they can also
3 cycle with wind.

4 Q. Perfect wind conditions suddenly come up.
5 Are there coal plants then that are running but
6 we're just not using all the power they're
7 producing because you can't shift them down
8 quickly, you don't do the -- you don't switch the
9 nuclear plant down quickly, so they're just
10 producing power that's not being used?

11 A. Well, we -- yeah, if the wind ramps up, we
12 look at the whole system and figure out what is the
13 most cost-effective, you know, resource to not --
14 or what resource can we not -- do we not need to
15 take in order to -- as the wind is there, it's
16 serving a certain need. Some of our coal plants we
17 do operate at less than a hundred percent power in
18 those sorts of situations, but if the market -- the
19 MISO market is such that there's a great need, we
20 can operate those power plants and sell into the
21 market as well. So the whole picture is actually
22 pretty complex and really dynamic, kind of minute
23 by minute, hour by hour of what resources are
24 running, what's in the market, is the wind blowing,
25 how are our power plants operating.

1 Q. So all this to me -- and tell me where I'm
2 looking at this wrong. It sort of looks to me like
3 all this complicated dynamics of the whole market
4 causes sort of a self-fulfilling prophecy that coal
5 is inefficient because we add more wind because
6 it's less expensive than coal or it's less
7 expensive than any other alternative, then on a day
8 when there's not a great demand, but the wind is
9 blowing well, we use the wind and don't use the
10 coal, but all the expenses of having and
11 maintaining the coal plant are there, and so it
12 doesn't change the cost of them any, it just
13 lessens the production of them and so they become
14 less efficient, so we add some more wind because
15 it's cheaper than coal and then even less of the
16 time are we using them full strength and they
17 become less efficient again. Aren't we just
18 playing into a self-fulfilling prophecy that it's a
19 less efficient type of energy production?

20 A. I appreciate your question and I
21 understand the -- I understand the question. I
22 think Steve Wishart is our expert witness on that
23 that could really walk through exactly how we plan
24 our system and then how we operate it and what that
25 means in terms of cost to our customers.

1 But when we, for example, look at new
2 resources, like new wind resources, when we take
3 them through an evaluation, we are really looking
4 at how would the system operate without them and
5 how would it operate with them. So I think we are
6 avoiding sort of that self-fulfilling prophecy.
7 That wouldn't be good business, it wouldn't make
8 sense to operate our system that way so I think
9 that we -- that we don't do that. And I think
10 Steve Wishart would be the one to walk you through
11 exactly how that process works.

12 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Thank you, Ms.
13 McCarten. Thanks for being here. As Commissioner
14 Kalk said, it's nice to have management people in
15 the room, and appreciate that.

16 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

17 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Thank you, Your
18 Honor.

19 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. Ms. Valley, do
20 you have any questions?

21 MS. VALLEY: Thank you, Judge Fetch and
22 Commissioners. I just have a few redirect
23 questions.

24 JUDGE FETCH: All right. We'll hold on
25 then because there will be more and it's noon and

1 we need to take a little break anyway for the court
2 reporter.

3 I can now say with complete confidence we
4 will not complete the company's case today. I've
5 asked Mr. Norrell and Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco to give me
6 some estimate on the remaining witnesses and that
7 will eat up the rest of today, and that's without
8 even the opening statements and then the
9 Commissioner questioning. So we will not get
10 through the company's case today. Probably we'll
11 get through another six witnesses, perhaps seven,
12 so there will be some witnesses tomorrow. I know
13 there is one witness that you indicated, Ms.
14 Valley, that needed to be called today, and that
15 was Lisa Perkett, so be aware, you know, of how you
16 present your witnesses and she would -- you know,
17 if you're going to take them in order, she'll be
18 able to get on today. But if there's anyone else
19 who must, you know, testify today because they're
20 leaving, be aware of that, because we are not going
21 to go beyond eight o'clock. My experience is
22 nobody is productive beyond a certain period of
23 time and that, I think, would be the limits of
24 pushing it.

25 So we are going to stand in recess. It is

1 noon. We will come back to order at one o'clock.
2 Thank you.

3 (Recess taken at 12:03 until 1:02 p.m.)

4 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. We'll come back
5 to order. And the time is about two minutes after
6 one o'clock p.m., Central Time. And we're going
7 to, at this time, continue with the hearing and the
8 witness, Laura McCarten. I believe, Kari Valley,
9 you had some questions for Ms. McCarten.

10 Oh, I'm going to mention we have a new
11 court reporter this afternoon. This is Linda
12 Gingery from Emineth & Associates. And Denise
13 Andahl will be back after the dinner break tonight.

14 All right. Let's proceed.

15 MS. VALLEY: Thank you, Judge Fetch,
16 Commissioners.

17 **REDIRECT EXAMINATION**

18 **BY MS. VALLEY:**

19 Q. Ms. McCarten, I just have a few follow-up
20 questions from our discussion today.

21 The Commissioners asked you about the rate
22 case drivers in this case and where in the
23 testimony they could find that, and I point you to
24 page 5 of your direct testimony.

25 A. Yes, I'm there.

1 Q. And does Figure 1 outline the case drivers
2 and the proportions of the case that are related to
3 those?

4 A. Yes, it does. I apologize for overlooking
5 this, but earlier I was asked a question as to what
6 proportion of the total request relates to nuclear
7 transmission, if I recall correctly, and if you
8 look at this chart, those two items together are
9 close to -- well, they are 12 million. So it's
10 approximately, you know, something under 75 percent
11 of the total request. We did modify our request
12 and the total request is now 14.9, but I believe
13 that the nuclear and transmission total amounts are
14 still very comparable to what is shown in this
15 table.

16 Q. Thank you. An additional question that
17 was raised was about future insurance increases.

18 Are there any future insurance increases,
19 either related to Sherco or any other matter that
20 are included in this case?

21 A. No.

22 Q. And following up on the question on
23 incentive compensation, the question from Advocacy
24 Staff Counsel was what the basis for the Wisconsin
25 decision was on AIP. And did you include the

1 Wisconsin order in your -- as an exhibit to your
2 rebuttal testimony?

3 A. It is an exhibit to my rebuttal testimony,
4 yes.

5 Q. And is it your understanding that the
6 order reflects the decisionmaking of the Commission
7 and the rationale that they adopted?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Ms. McCarten, on the pension expenses,
10 just for clarification for some of the questions
11 that were raised regarding that, does the company
12 use actuarial studies to plan for meeting its
13 future pension obligations?

14 A. Yes. We do use actuarial studies and we
15 are accounting for the expected longer lives of
16 current employees. So that factor is planned for
17 in our pension plan.

18 Q. And for the test year pension amounts, not
19 reflecting anything outside of the test year, does
20 this include an amortized portion of the 2008
21 market loss?

22 A. Yes, it does. It includes an amortized
23 portion of the 2008 market loss, and our mitigation
24 proposal would be to further extend the
25 amortization period.

1 Q. Another question that was raised was on
2 the company's performance for 2012. And was the
3 authorized return on equity for 2012 10.4 percent?

4 A. For the North Dakota jurisdiction the 2012
5 authorized ROE was 10.4 percent.

6 Q. And do you know what the actual earned
7 rate of return on equity was in 2012?

8 A. Yes. We calculated that and actually
9 provided that to the Commission. We calculated
10 that as weather normalized and then as just
11 straight actual normal. The weather normalized
12 return on equity in 2012 was 8.92 percent for the
13 North Dakota jurisdiction.

14 Q. So the company did not over earn in 2012?

15 A. No.

16 MS. VALLEY: Thank you, Ms. McCarten.

17 JUDGE FETCH: All right. That's all the
18 questions. Let's go to Ryan Norrell. Do you have
19 any more questions for Ms. McCarten?

20 MR. NORRELL: Just a few, Your Honor.

21 JUDGE FETCH: Go ahead.

22 MR. NORRELL: Thank you.

23 I would like to -- may I approach the
24 witness with an exhibit?

25 JUDGE FETCH: Yes. Yes.

1 been asking about economic development. Is
2 membership -- is Xcel Energy or NSP part of the
3 Greater North Dakota Chamber of Commerce at all?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. And is it true that the company is seeking
6 to -- they're trying to get 50 percent of economic
7 development costs back from ratepayers; is that
8 correct?

9 A. Correct.

10 Q. And Commissioner Christmann raised some
11 issues about lobbying. And as you had said, part
12 of doing business is lobbying for economic
13 development; is that correct?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. The first two pages -- on the second page
16 I would like to just draw attention to about a
17 third -- a quarter of the way down, it does state
18 that Mr. Mark Nisbet as a member or representative
19 of Xcel Energy, is a member of the Greater North
20 Dakota Chamber of Commerce; is that correct?

21 A. That's correct.

22 Q. On the third page, I would like to draw
23 attention about three-fourths of the way down on
24 the third page is House Bill 1064. And it's -- it
25 points out where the Chamber of Commerce stands on

1 each of these. Thumbs up would be support. Thumbs
2 down would be oppose. Two lines would be no
3 action.

4 Could you tell me what 1064, what the
5 position would be for the North Dakota Chamber of
6 Commerce?

7 A. 1064, "relating to the maximum penalty for
8 a violation of pipeline safety standards."

9 Q. What was the position of the Chamber of
10 Commerce?

11 A. There's an icon here that indicates a
12 thumbs-down position.

13 Q. Were you aware that the North Dakota
14 Public Service Commission was a sponsoring agency
15 of that bill?

16 A. I may have been, but I just -- it's not
17 something that I can recollect for certain right
18 here.

19 Q. I guess staff's position is why should we
20 allow for recovery of funds that go to lobbying
21 against positions that we would take?

22 A. Well, the North Dakota Chamber of Commerce
23 represents a diverse set of views certainly. Xcel
24 Energy is one of those, and you can even see from
25 the list of the board members the diversity of the

1 businesses that are a part of the North Dakota
2 Chamber. So when it -- although I'm not directly
3 involved with the North Dakota Chamber, I think it
4 probably functions as many others; is that they
5 poll their members and see whether they have
6 majority support for certain policy decisions to
7 take. So I don't know that we would have supported
8 everything down the line. I haven't reviewed this
9 carefully.

10 So I guess it's part of what happens when
11 you belong to an organization that does represent a
12 broad base of interests, but there is a commonality
13 there, I think, in promoting a strong business
14 climate in the State of Minnesota -- excuse me --
15 State of North Dakota. Jeez, my phone did go off
16 and --

17 Q. That's okay. We'll forgive you.

18 A. -- I said the "M" word. I'm so sorry.

19 Q. The other question I have is in regards to
20 your -- I believe it's in your rebuttal testimony,
21 Schedule 1, which would be the Wisconsin order. On
22 page 11 is the discussion of the annual incentive
23 pay denial.

24 A. Okay. I'm with you there.

25 Q. The Commission there states that the

1 second -- it would be the second full sentence,
2 "According to the overall company performance
3 component, which establishes the company's ability
4 to pay, certain targeted earnings per share goals
5 must be achieved by the company before the program
6 will pay any rewards."

7 Could you describe what that means, "a
8 certain targeted earnings per share goals must be
9 met"?

10 A. I do not have the design of the
11 compensation program in front of me. I do -- I
12 mean, a portion of it is a financial target that
13 relates to earnings per share. So I think we do
14 set goals for ourselves that we communicate to the
15 financial markets as well. And I presume it ties
16 to that.

17 Q. So the incentive pay only kicks in if the
18 company makes a certain amount of money; is that
19 how this kind of reads?

20 A. I think, you know, again, since I'm not
21 fully conversant with the design of the incentive
22 plan, perhaps I could direct you to a different
23 witness to -- I think we have an expert witness on
24 that, Sharon Koenig.

25 MR. NORRELL: I have no further questions,

1 Your Honor.

2 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you.

3 Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco, do you have any other
4 questions?

5 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: I have no questions.
6 Thank you.

7 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. Commissioners?
8 Commissioner Fedorchak?

9 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: I'm fine.

10 JUDGE FETCH: Commissioner Kalk, do you
11 have a question?

12 COMMISSIONER KALK: Yes, ma'am. Yes, Your
13 Honor. I actually have one before we go back to
14 the redirect, if you don't mind if I ask that
15 question?

16 JUDGE FETCH: Go ahead.

17 **EXAMINATION**

18 **BY COMMISSIONER KALK:**

19 Q. I just wanted to clarify, Laura, with your
20 background in transmission, this transmission cost
21 recovery rider that you're proposing, that's new in
22 North Dakota jurisdiction, correct, we've never
23 done anything like that before in North Dakota?

24 A. I may be wrong, but I believe it is in
25 place for Ottertail and MDU.

1 Q. Okay. New for Xcel?

2 A. New for Xcel Energy, yes.

3 Q. I'm trying not to make decisions while I'm
4 sitting here, but to me it looks like it might be
5 the only alternative short of a rate case every
6 year.

7 Is that the same way you see the
8 transmission rider, that if the Commission wouldn't
9 go with some kind of rider, we're going to be in
10 here every year for a rate case?

11 A. Well, Commissioner, I think that does tie
12 back to one of the proposals that I made, which was
13 for a capital step in the next year and, also --

14 Q. Where is that at? You said you made that
15 proposal. Is that somewhere in the record that we
16 can refer to, or is that just what you did today?

17 A. Commissioner, that is in my rebuttal
18 testimony.

19 Q. Okay. All right.

20 A. And would be glad to explore that further
21 with staff.

22 Q. No, I think we're good, Laura. I think
23 you answered my question there. I need to follow
24 up on what Mr. Norrell pointed back, because if you
25 look -- what's the name of this exhibit, Your

1 Honor?

2 JUDGE FETCH: Ten, PSC 10.

3 Q. (COMMISSIONER KALK CONTINUING) i just
4 wanted to -- Laura, if you take a look at page 2
5 and look down to the second from the bottom up, do
6 you see where it says "Jay Skabo" --

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. -- "MDU Resources Group"?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. So that would be a counterpart of Xcel if
11 it was your -- what would we call Xcel's equivalent
12 of MDU Resources?

13 A. Is MDU Resources their parent company?

14 Q. It's their parent, yeah.

15 A. Xcel Energy would be the equivalent then.

16 Q. So is Mr. Nisbet employed just with the
17 utility company or is he employed in both areas?

18 A. Mr. Nisbet is entirely an NSP Minnesota
19 company employee.

20 Q. Okay. I think it's just a nuance -- my
21 personal opinion, it's just a nuance of how this
22 is. And I know that -- belonging to these
23 organizations, I know that oftentimes we'll seek
24 Xcel's viewpoints on testimony. Actually, quite
25 honestly, on 1064, we had Carlee Mcleod out here

1 from Utility Shareholders. Xcel was a supporter of
2 that through Utility Shareholders of North Dakota.
3 That's the way I understand that, but I wanted to
4 make sure that you're aware that you work through
5 Utility Shareholders, if you have any comment on
6 that, for your lobbying efforts, if you will.

7 A. We certainly provide support to the North
8 Dakota Utility Investor Company. I think that they
9 represent their shareholders. That's their prime
10 mission, is to represent the people who own
11 stock -- I should say stockholders in the
12 companies. So -- and I don't argue with your
13 representation that we supported that. I wasn't
14 directly involved, but I take your position on
15 that.

16 Q. Okay. And then the follow on of donations
17 in -- the Sooner scenario with Ottertail, this came
18 up, and the Commission at that time, myself,
19 Commissioners Clark and Kramer, basically agreed we
20 did not want to have ratepayer dollars going for
21 that. We have not made any decisions here. We
22 talked with the company about a phaseout of that.

23 If the Commission would decide to say no
24 on that, would a phaseout plan be something that
25 may be acceptable, or would that be one of those

1 things, if you can't have it, it's either in or
2 out?

3 A. Well, Commissioner, I an await your
4 decision on that. I think if we are --

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Yeah, we would like to recover 50 percent
7 of those costs.

8 Q. Okay. Thank you.

9 COMMISSIONER KALK: Thank you, Your Honor.

10 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you.

11 Commissioner Christmann, any follow-up?

12 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: No further
13 questions, Your Honor.

14 JUDGE FETCH: Ms. Valley, any further
15 questions?

16 MS. VALLEY: Thank you. No, Your Honor.

17 JUDGE FETCH: Mr. Norrell?

18 MR. NORRELL: No, Your Honor.

19 JUDGE FETCH: All right. Thank you.

20 Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco?

21 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: No.

22 JUDGE FETCH: Okay. No more from the
23 Commission. That will be all. Ms. McCarten,
24 you're excused.

25 THE WITNESS: Thank you very much.

1 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. All right.

2 At this time, Ms. Valley, identify your
3 next witness, please.

4 MS. VALLEY: Thank you, Your Honor. The
5 company calls as its next witness Mr. Steve Foss.

6 JUDGE FETCH: All right. Mr. Foss.

7 Mr. Foss, were you present earlier when I
8 instructed about perjury and penalties for perjury?

9 THE WITNESS: Yes, I was.

10 JUDGE FETCH: All right. Thank you.

11 Please raise your right hand.

12 Do you solemnly swear the testimony you're
13 about to give shall be the truth under the pains
14 and penalties of perjury? If so, answer, I do.

15 THE WITNESS: I do.

16 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. All right. And
17 I believe you have a prepared witness opening
18 statement?

19 THE WITNESS: Yes, I do.

20 JUDGE FETCH: That is now being passed out
21 to the Commissioners and Mr. Norrell, and everyone.

22 All right. Ms. Valley, you may proceed.

23 First of all, we'll identify this. You
24 have marked it as NSP Exhibit 24.

25 And is there going to be any objection,

1 Mr. Norrell?

2 MR. NORRELL: No, Your Honor.

3 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. That exhibit is
4 admitted. Go ahead.

5 **STEPHEN FOSS,**

6 Being first duly sworn, was examined and testified
7 as follows:

8 **DIRECT EXAMINATION**

9 **BY MS. VALLEY:**

10 Q. Mr. Foss, you have in front of you what
11 has been marked as Exhibit 7 as your prefiled
12 direct testimony already admitted into the record
13 in this proceeding.

14 Do you have any corrections to that
15 testimony?

16 A. No.

17 Q. And, Mr. Foss, please proceed with your
18 opening statement.

19 A. Thank you. My testimony discusses the
20 2013 capital and O&M budgets for operations
21 organization, which includes energy supply,
22 transmission and distribution. Operations is
23 focused on excellence in employee and public
24 safety, continuous improvement, and efficiency.
25 Our goal is to provide the safe and reliable

1 service our customers expect.

2 While each major function within
3 operations has a slightly different planning and
4 budgeting process due to the business they manage,
5 overall our processes are extensive and
6 comprehensive and entail significant analysis and
7 review. The 2013 capital and O&M budgets reflected
8 in this rate application include expenditures we
9 expected at the time to incur. Since the original
10 filing, we have made changes to some projects and
11 appropriate adjustments were made and described in
12 Ms. Heuer's rebuttal testimony.

13 One of these adjustments was to remove the
14 emissions chemicals and avoidable O&M costs at Unit
15 3 of our largest coal plant, the Sherco facility,
16 for the first nine months of 2013. As discussed in
17 our status reports to the Commission, the turbine
18 failure in November of 2011 caused major damage to
19 the plant. We have managed the massive repair
20 effort with two fundamental objectives in mind:
21 First, doing the job right so Sherco 3 can provide
22 safe and reliable services for many years to come
23 and, second, protecting the interests of our
24 customers.

25 The Sherco 3 project work is progressing

1 well. The extensive investigation of the event
2 indicates that the original cause was a failure of
3 the mechanical connections between the low pressure
4 turbine blades and the rotor. The failure was not
5 one we could have predicted or prevented. All
6 major equipment restoration and reassembly work has
7 been completed and we are in the final stages of
8 testing. We expect the plant to be back in service
9 and in use to serve our customers around the end of
10 September.

11 Maintaining and improving reliability for
12 our North Dakota customers is an important priority
13 for our operations area. The reliability of our
14 North Dakota operations continues to be the best in
15 the NSP system. As part of our settlement
16 agreement in the last rate case, several
17 reliability-based commitments were made, each of
18 which has been completed or is in the process,
19 including the establishment of a North
20 Dakota-focused Reliability Performance Plan
21 approved in late 2012.

22 The investments and costs that we have
23 included in the test year for the operations
24 organization are what we believe to be necessary to
25 maintain the high quality, safe, and reliable

1 service our North Dakota customers expect.

2 Commissioners, I appreciate the
3 opportunity to be here today, and I will do my very
4 best to answer any questions you or your staff may
5 have about my testimony in this case. Thank you.

6 MS. VALLEY: The witness is available for
7 cross-examination.

8 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you, Ms. Valley.

9 Mr. Norrell.

10 MR. NORRELL: Thank you, Your Honor.

11 **CROSS-EXAMINATION**

12 **BY MR. NORRELL:**

13 Q. Mr. Foss, and everybody in the room, I'd
14 like to refer everyone to PSC Exhibit 8.

15 MR. NORRELL: And with the Judge's
16 permission, I'd like to approach the witness with
17 this as well.

18 JUDGE FETCH: Go ahead, Mr. Norrell.

19 Q. (MR. NORRELL CONTINUING) This was a
20 question I had asked Ms. McCarten. She referred it
21 to you. Were you in the room when I asked the
22 question regarding items 7 and 12? We've got two
23 failures here, both over an hour long, both over
24 1,000 customers, but the outage report says that
25 the criteria has not been met to replace these

1 lines. What does it take to meet that criteria to
2 replace this, especially in light of a rate
3 increase like this?

4 A. Yeah, we have several guidelines that our
5 engineers utilize. Simply stated, we look at,
6 first, you know, does it have two failures within
7 two years, and that would be criteria one that our
8 engineers would like at. Within that, there are a
9 few more, you know, details, depending -- that our
10 engineers would look at, depending on, you know,
11 how it's segmented and that type of thing, but the
12 short version is two outages in two years -- within
13 two years and it's meeting the replacement
14 criteria.

15 Secondly, as related to our 500 mcm cable
16 that we've talked about the proactive program to
17 replace, if it's a 500 mcm cable, it would then go
18 on the list for replacement at that time. It would
19 not require the two years.

20 Now, I would, you know, comment that, you
21 know, as these outages occur, you know, certainly,
22 you know, our first action is to attempt to get
23 things back in service, so we may replace that
24 cable at that time. We may -- or more likely would
25 be attempting to splice it to return service, and

1 then our engineers would take a look at our
2 criteria, the particular situation, and make a
3 determination whether it goes on the schedule to
4 be, you know, eventually completed.

5 MR. NORRELL: All right. I have no
6 further questions, Your Honor.

7 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you.

8 Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco, any questions?

9

EXAMINATION

10 **BY MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO:**

11 Q. Towards the end of your testimony, you
12 talk about adding performance metrics to drive
13 employee engagement and operational excellence. I
14 think it's page 36. Can you give me some idea what
15 you're talking about there?

16 A. You know, there's probably a lot of
17 examples depending on the business segments. I'll
18 speak to distribution, which is an area that I'm
19 involved in. Certainly, we're starting to put more
20 and more in place related to cost per unit. I
21 would say looking at the productivity of our crews,
22 we have measures currently, estimate to actuals,
23 where we're looking at, okay, you know, if it's
24 designed this way and estimated, are crews being
25 productive and accomplishing it in that manner, you

1 know, that would be two examples.

2 Q. Could you be a little more specific with
3 one of those? It's just so general.

4 A. Yes. So, for instance, on a cost-per-
5 unit measure, you know, we would look at some
6 different segments of our distribution business
7 that we typically spend a lot of resource on. For
8 instance, the replacement of underground cables.
9 You know, we know roughly what a, you know, cost
10 per unit typically would be on average and we would
11 track each project to see how we performed against
12 that to determine whether, you know, there's
13 improvements, discussions with employees, you know,
14 that could be made in that process.

15 Q. Is that tied -- is the incentive pay tied
16 to those efforts?

17 A. No, it's not. No.

18 Q. So they're just used not for compensation
19 at all, but simply for changing something in
20 operations to improve?

21 A. I would say that's generally accurate.
22 However, you know, the management staff, using this
23 example for distribution, to the extent that, you
24 know, we choose to focus on that in a particular
25 area and put it into their performance plan to try

1 to drive a change, it would certainly impact their
2 individual performance, which eventually has some
3 tie to their compensation, but not directly to the
4 incentive.

5 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: Okay. Thank you.

6 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. At this time
7 we'll go to the Commission.

8 Commissioner Fedorchak.

9

EXAMINATION

10 **BY COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK:**

11 Q. Good afternoon.

12 A. Good afternoon.

13 Q. In your testimony on page 6, in your
14 original testimony, you outline -- Table 2 outlines
15 your five year kind of capital expenditure plan.
16 What are we looking at from this included in this
17 rate case? What is included, just the 2013 stuff?

18 A. Yes, but, I mean, in particular, the plan
19 additions would probably be the bigger driver on
20 Table 1, so that would outline, you know, the
21 capital additions that are going in plan and
22 service that eventually work into the revenue
23 requirements that Ms. Heuer, you know, utilizes.
24 So what you're seeing there is over a two-year
25 period, the additions in 2012 and 2013, the

1 addition of \$923 million in plan and service for
2 those three business areas.

3 What Table 2 then references is actual
4 capital expenditures leading up to those additions,
5 and then this provides a forward look at what our
6 current forecasts are for those years. So the 2013
7 column would be -- you know, we would say our 2013
8 capital expenditure budget is and then this would
9 be a forward look at currently what we're seeing
10 out there and projected as part of our budgeting
11 process.

12 Q. And is this how it typically looks when
13 you're building out? What does it -- when you're
14 not doing these massive upgrades and build-outs,
15 what would that table look like, a five-year
16 capital expenditure? What's normal?

17 A. You know, I don't really know what's
18 normal.

19 Q. Is there normal?

20 A. Dating back, I'm not sure that there is.
21 You know, but I would comment, you know, possibly
22 an indicator there is, if you look at energy
23 supply, you can see a fairly stable expenditure
24 pattern, so, you know, this does not include
25 nuclear, so this is our coal, you know, and gas

1 units for NSP MN. And you can see a fairly stable
2 capital expenditure, so not a lot of build-out, as
3 discussed, you know, within my testimony, focus on
4 more modernization, you know, and updating those
5 existing plants.

6 Similar on the distribution, you can see a
7 slight ramp-up, but not a large buildup. A lot of
8 our focus, as discussed in my testimony, is in
9 modernization and some of our reliability programs.
10 What you can see, however, in the transmission is
11 the build-out that I believe you may be referring
12 to on the transmission. In 2013, as an example, if
13 you look at the \$500 million number, you know,
14 approximately 66 percent of that is cap ex
15 expenditures. Similar in 2014, approximately 50
16 percent of that \$397 million is cap ex, and then
17 you can see kind of the ramp-down of the cap ex
18 programs, the group one programs during that
19 period.

20 Q. Okay. And then in his questioning,
21 Mr. Norrell asked Laura about this chart, page 9 of
22 this -- what do you call it -- the NDPSC data
23 request 10-003. Are you familiar with this? Would
24 you be the correct person among the witnesses to
25 discuss why NSP Minnesota is at -- their percent

1 non-fuel O&M is at more than 30 percent of retail
2 revenue versus Xcel Energy as a whole or NSP
3 Wisconsin which is way down at 15 percent?

4 A. (Witness reviews document.) I'm not
5 familiar with it, and I'm not sure I would be the
6 right person.

7 Q. I'd like someone to explain why there's
8 such a big difference between the O&M expenditures
9 for NSP Minnesota versus Wisconsin or Xcel as a
10 whole.

11 A. Yeah, I'm not sure who could address that.
12 I don't know that offhand here to answer that
13 question. And whatever I would tell you would
14 probably be speculation.

15 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Okay. All right.
16 That's it for me.

17 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you, Commissioner
18 Fedorchak. Commissioner Kalk?

19 COMMISSIONER KALK: Thank you, Your Honor.

20 **EXAMINATION**

21 **BY COMMISSIONER KALK:**

22 Q. Thank you, Steve, for your testimony. You
23 have to talk to your boss, Laura, and ask her why
24 she couldn't get through hers as quick as you got
25 through yours.

1 Are you the best person to talk about this
2 transmission rider? Is there a future witness
3 dedicated to that?

4 A. Yeah, I would not be the right person.
5 I'm kind of the operations person. I guess I defer
6 to our attorneys on who they may suggest.

7 Q. Okay. So cost allocation issues, you
8 wouldn't want to talk about those?

9 A. No, I wouldn't.

10 Q. We're wearing it down here. In the
11 previous rate case you talked about in your
12 testimony, the Commission, I wouldn't say we
13 approved, I'd say we almost directed those 25
14 IntelliSwitches. Could we use those
15 IntelliSwitches in Grand Forks or Minot?

16 A. Yeah, you know, we're taking a look at
17 that. You know, first of all, the main reason we
18 focused in Fargo was related to the distribution
19 system design. You know, we have the different
20 voltage. We have the 23.9, which typically we are
21 carrying more customers on the feeder segments,
22 which is where that IntelliTeam can really provide
23 its value, you know, isolating, segmenting that and
24 putting a lot of customers in quickly.

25 You know, with the design of the system in

1 Minot and Grand Forks, you know, at the 13.15 kV
2 systems essentially, there's not as many
3 opportunities, but I would say that in talking to
4 our engineering group, you know, we do think there
5 may be some opportunities with some of the critical
6 facilities in town, you know, for us to take a look
7 and see, you know, what --

8 Q. How would we wrap that up, because I look
9 forward to hearing your thoughts. If you think
10 that we could use some in Grand Forks, that's
11 something I would be willing to look at it, because
12 the initial results for Fargo, it's made a
13 difference, a positive difference.

14 A. Whatever mechanism we'd like to tie up.
15 You know, we certainly -- we're looking at it right
16 now and, certainly, you know, we can commit, you
17 know, to provide an update of that --

18 Q. How would we want to do that?

19 A. -- outside of this rate case or however
20 you'd like to do that.

21 COMMISSIONER KALK: Would that be a
22 late-filed exhibit? That's something that's kind
23 of open-ended. In a previous rate case we
24 basically just sat down and said you're going to do
25 it, and then said figure it out. It would be nice

1 to have some dialogue from the company, saying,
2 yes, we think we could, if you could use some of
3 those in the Grand Forks area, then that could be
4 something we could certainly consider.

5 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: Well, I think if you
6 ask the company if they would be able to produce
7 such an exhibit, it would be appropriate as a
8 late-filed exhibit. If the company is not able to
9 answer that question -- nothing inappropriate.

10 Q. (COMMISSIONER KALK CONTINUING) Do you
11 think you could get something like that within the
12 next 30 days?

13 A. We will do something.

14 COMMISSIONER KALK: All right. That would
15 be great, Your Honor, to get a late-filed exhibit
16 on IntelliTeam switches potential in Grand Forks
17 and Minot, or maybe even additional ones needed in
18 Fargo.

19 JUDGE FETCH: Okay. Do you understand
20 what --

21 THE WITNESS: I do.

22 JUDGE FETCH: -- is being asked, Mr. Foss?

23 THE WITNESS: I do.

24 JUDGE FETCH: Okay. Then what we'd be
25 looking at is late-filed exhibit -- well, Exhibit D

1 being a late-filed exhibit.

2 Any objections, counsel?

3 MR. NORRELL: No, Your Honor.

4 MS. VALLEY: No, Your Honor.

5 JUDGE FETCH: All right. Late-filed
6 Exhibit D, then, will be admitted. Thank you.

7 COMMISSIONER KALK: Thank you, Your Honor.

8 Q. (COMMISSIONER KALK CONTINUING) The NERC
9 reliability standards, are anything that's happened
10 in the exhibit that's been talked about up in Grand
11 Forks with the number of hours, is any of those in
12 violation of NERC standards? That's not NERC
13 standard's jurisdiction, for lack of a better term,
14 is it?

15 A. Will you restate that question?

16 Q. The standards for NERC, different
17 standards of how you do things, none of the outages
18 that have happened in Grand Forks violate anything
19 in the NERC standards?

20 A. I would have to verify, but my
21 understanding is not, but I would have to verify
22 that answer.

23 Q. Okay. My assumption would be it wouldn't,
24 but I wanted to double-check that question.

25 COMMISSIONER KALK: That was all that I

1 had, Your Honor.

2 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you, Commissioner
3 Kalk. Commissioner Christmann?

4 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Your Honor, I
5 have no questions for Mr. Foss.

6 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you.

7 Ms. Valley, do you have any redirect?

8 MS. VALLEY: No, Your Honor.

9 JUDGE FETCH: Mr. Norrell, any further
10 questions?

11 MR. NORRELL: No, Your Honor. Thank you.

12 JUDGE FETCH: Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco?

13 **FURTHER EXAMINATION**

14 **BY MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO:**

15 Q. Well, I do. I was going to ask if you
16 were the appropriate witness for the cost
17 accounting treatment for Brookings, and then when I
18 heard the discourse, I was going to guess no, but
19 there is a portion of your testimony, page 28, that
20 talks about the transmission revenues from MISO.

21 And what I wanted to know, if you're the
22 appropriate person to answer, is are all the
23 revenues credited back to customers through the
24 fuel adjustment? All, you know, transmission
25 revenues that come from MISO credited back to

1 customers?

2 A. That would probably be something better
3 answered by Ms. Heuer, I believe.

4 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: Okay. That's all.
5 Thank you.

6 JUDGE FETCH: Does anyone have any further
7 questions for this witness? All right. Seeing no
8 further questions, that will comprise your
9 testimony. And thank you, Mr. Foss.

10 THE WITNESS: Thank you. Thank you,
11 Commissioners.

12 JUDGE FETCH: All right. Ms. Valley,
13 identify your next witness, please.

14 MS. VALLEY: Thank you. The company calls
15 as its next witness, Mr. Timothy J. O'Connor.

16 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. And,
17 Mr. O'Connor, I believe you were present earlier
18 when I instructed about penalties for perjury, were
19 you not?

20 THE WITNESS: Yes, ma'am.

21 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. Please raise
22 your right hand.

23 Do you solemnly swear the testimony you're
24 about to give shall be the truth under pains and
25 penalties of perjury?

1 THE WITNESS: I do.

2 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you.

3 And is Ms. Paulson passing out the witness
4 statement for Mr. O'Connor?

5 MS. PAULSON: Yes.

6 JUDGE FETCH: All right. Thank you. And
7 this is NSP Exhibit 25. Is there any objection to
8 this exhibit?

9 MR. NORRELL: No, Your Honor.

10 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. NSP 25 is
11 admitted.

12 Ms. Valley, you may proceed.

13 **TIMOTHY J. O'CONNOR,**
14 being first duly sworn, was examined and testified
15 as follows:

16 **DIRECT EXAMINATION**

17 **BY MS. VALLEY:**

18 Q. Mr. O'Connor, as you walked up to the
19 stand today, you were presented with copies of
20 Exhibits NSP 8, NSP 9A, and NSP 9B. Those are
21 copies of your public and nonpublic versions of the
22 direct and rebuttal testimony filed in this case.

23 Do you have any corrections to your
24 testimony?

25 A. I have NSP 8 and NSP 9A.

1 Q. Oh, I'm sorry. 9B has been admitted
2 separately as trade secret. I apologize,
3 Mr. O'Connor.

4 Do you have any corrections to your
5 testimony?

6 A. No, I do not.

7 Q. Thank you. Do you have an opening
8 statement?

9 A. I do.

10 Q. Please proceed.

11 A. Good afternoon. My name is Tim O'Connor.
12 I'm the Senior Vice-President and Chief Nuclear
13 Officer for Xcel Energy.

14 The company has made and continues to make
15 significant investment in the Prairie Island and
16 the Monticello nuclear facilities to maximum the
17 clean, reliable energy produced over their extended
18 operating lives. The investments are necessary to
19 keep the units operating and available as
20 round-the-clock carbon-free base load units.

21 The company is ensuring that it is
22 efficiently using its nuclear plants by performing
23 work necessary to extend the operating lives of all
24 the plants and also increasing the generating
25 capacity at Monticello. Monticello extended power

1 uprate/life cycle management project will allow us
2 to provide safe, reliable, low cost energy to our
3 customers through 2030. We are currently waiting
4 for our power uprate license approval by the
5 Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and have removed the
6 licensing costs from our current rate request.
7 However, all investments and plant upgrades to date
8 are in service and being used today to generate
9 power, and our customers are currently benefitting
10 from those investments. Therefore, as explained in
11 my rebuttal testimony, the operating and
12 maintenance costs for Monticello are not avoided
13 due to the license delay. Rather all these costs
14 are currently being incurred as Monticello is in
15 service and providing electricity to all of our
16 customers.

17 The nuclear operations arena is changing
18 as safety continues to be redefined. Safe nuclear
19 power operations is compliance-driven by an
20 independent regulator, specifically the Nuclear
21 Regulatory Commission, promulgating regulations in
22 response to lessons learned from day-to-day
23 operations of all nuclear plants operating world-
24 wide. The Fukushima event is an example of a
25 worldwide event reshaping nuclear safety and

1 certainly USA nuclear operations. Public health
2 and safety standards in nuclear operations are not
3 stagnant as demonstrated by the increased
4 regulatory requirements. The license requirements
5 under life extension are more stringent than those
6 under the original license and we are responding
7 accordingly to ensure the safety and long-term
8 availability of these key resources through their
9 extended operating lives.

10 In addition, nuclear employee retention is
11 a significant issue. The nuclear industry is
12 facing a decline in experienced nuclear workers, as
13 well as increased competition globally for those
14 remaining experienced workers, which has
15 contributed to a shortage of specialized, skilled
16 labor. We have implemented a practical and
17 necessary plan for recruiting and retaining the
18 highly-qualified workforce to assure workforce
19 stability as our customers are better served by
20 retaining the employees with the experience and
21 skill sets necessary to keep our plants operating
22 safely, efficiently, and effectively.

23 I appreciate the opportunity to be here
24 today, and I'm available to answer any questions.

25 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you.

1 MS. VALLEY: Thank you, Mr. O'Connor. The
2 witness is available for cross-examination.

3 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. Mr. Norrell.

4 MR. NORRELL: Thank you, Your Honor.

5 **CROSS-EXAMINATION**

6 **BY MR. NORRELL:**

7 Q. Mr. O'Connor, my first question is just,
8 could you address the company's outstanding license
9 renewals? What is the status of those?

10 A. Are you referring to the extended licenses
11 for the plants, or are you referring to --

12 Q. The extended licenses, yes.

13 A. Monticello has been granted and is already
14 in its new operating license, extended license
15 life. It's a 20-year extension. Prairie Island
16 Unit 1 just went -- both plants have been approved.
17 Unit 1 went into its extended life August 9th, and
18 Prairie Island Unit 2 will enter its new 20-year
19 life a year from approximately today.

20 Q. Does that mean that the -- okay. I
21 apologize. I'm getting notes here. On page 2 of
22 your rebuttal, and you have stated here as well in
23 your introductory statement, that the Monticello
24 upgrade is in service or the Monticello -- is the
25 upgrade in service at this point right now? What's

1 the status of that?

2 A. I think what you're referring to is the
3 power uprate portion --

4 Q. Yes. Yes.

5 A. -- is that correct?

6 Q. That's correct.

7 A. Well, let me try to explain. The project
8 that was undertaken for Monticello was twofold.
9 First, it was to go into the extended operating
10 license life of 20 more years, which required
11 certain pieces of equipment to either be replaced,
12 which is one option, or I would say reengineered,
13 which is another option. We chose to replace. And
14 by doing that in what I would say an engineered
15 fashion, we could do it by replacing the equipment
16 and affording us the ability to increase the power
17 output of the plant simply by changing the size of
18 some of the equipment that was in the facility.
19 That's the project approach that we took to get a
20 twofold outcome.

21 All of the equipment necessary for current
22 operating or running at the new 100 percent are in
23 service running to the current license of 100
24 percent power. So if I replace reactor feed pumps
25 for the old condition, I'm running them now for the

1 current condition, as well as the anticipated
2 higher output levels. We simply will increase the
3 output of the existing equipment.

4 Q. But the increase has not yet taken place
5 yet; is that correct?

6 A. The increase has not been allowed yet by
7 the NRC. However, the equipment is ready and in
8 service, functioning, ready to go.

9 Q. When do you anticipate the NRC will allow
10 that increase to take place?

11 A. We've been in the process for a period of
12 time. The next approval cycle for the NRC is
13 actually coming up here September 5th with a
14 subcommittee of the Commissioners. Once that's
15 done, within 30 to 40 days, we expect a
16 recommendation to be made to the Commissioners, at
17 which point a license would either be granted or
18 not. We expect, given all of our inputs, that the
19 license will be granted.

20 Q. Do you know how long after September 5th
21 it would be -- anticipating the approval, how long
22 that would be? Are we talking weeks or months?

23 A. From the time that -- if I receive the
24 license, where I would say increase power, is that
25 what you're asking?

1 Q. Yes. Yeah.

2 A. There are -- it would be approximately 40
3 to 60 days before we would see the first increase
4 in power, and that's because of the license
5 requirements between the NRC and us is that I may
6 be allowed to go to a higher level, but we do it in
7 very -- in increment stages, and that's to validate
8 that the design and the analysis all support the
9 mathematical models that have been done. The NRC,
10 because of experiences in the industry, has more of
11 an integrated evaluation with the licensee as we
12 raise power. So, roughly, I would say it will be
13 about 60 days where we'll start to see the first
14 power increase.

15 Q. Okay. On page 13 of your rebuttal
16 testimony, you state that you provide -- I
17 apologize. It's your direct testimony.

18 A. Direct. Okay.

19 Q. Okay. Wonders of technology here. Let me
20 see if I can pull that up. You state that you
21 could provide some additional information on the
22 program to retain your nuclear employees.

23 Could you describe what -- what steps -- I
24 guess even regardless of what's in the testimony,
25 what steps have you guys taken? Could you describe

1 the company's plan to retain nuclear employees?

2 A. Are you on a particular page, just so I'm
3 on the same that you are? I'm on page 13 of
4 direct. And I don't think that's the correct
5 place.

6 Q. It's rebuttal. I'm sorry.

7 A. Is it rebuttal?

8 Q. Yes, rebuttal. It would be line 25, page
9 13.

10 A. Thank you.

11 JUDGE FETCH: What was the question,
12 Mr. Norrell?

13 MR. NORRELL: The question is just
14 additional information was submitted by
15 Mr. O'Connor, if he could just give an overview of
16 that additional information, what kind of plans are
17 in place regarding the retention.

18 THE WITNESS: The plans that -- the
19 economics of the plans I would refer to another
20 witness. The philosophy of the plan I can
21 certainly give you understanding. Is that what
22 you're asking, or are you looking for the details
23 of the numbers?

24 Q. (MR. NORRELL CONTINUING) Even the
25 philosophy of the plan would be fine.

1 A. I'll explain the philosophy. That's the
2 one I can give best. As I said in my opening
3 remarks, the industry is shrinking in experienced
4 workers. Baby boomers, a lack of interest in
5 nuclear, has shrunk the experience level. This is
6 not an industry that takes people directly from the
7 outside and just puts them in jobs because of the
8 consequences and ramifications that come from
9 making mistakes. So there's a great deal of
10 experience that's necessary, particularly in
11 decisionmaking.

12 So that's very high premium to obtain, and
13 that knowledge base has begun to shrink because of
14 disinterest in nuclear, retirements, and so on.
15 And we have experienced that it's America and
16 people have choices and they do make it when there
17 is better competition than me. Quite frankly, a
18 workforce that is in constant turnover is not a
19 good recipe for, I would say, sustainable nuclear
20 operations and, therefore, we experienced some
21 losses and found that we had to change our
22 attraction and retention in order for us to keep
23 that experience and, therefore, keep the stability
24 in our power plants and, therefore, have more
25 predictability behind the operations.

1 And that's exactly what it was designed to
2 do, was simply to relook at market competitiveness,
3 look at our competition and structure ourselves so
4 that we were more in those lines.

5 Q. Okay. Is it -- what do you think drives
6 the lack of interest in the nuclear employment?

7 A. It's not an easy game. I think that the
8 pressures that are put on engineers, on managers
9 and supervisors, it's a 24/7 job. It is extremely
10 regulated by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. It
11 isn't just -- in fact, there are people that are
12 assigned to the sites on a 24, basically, 7 basis.
13 So every activity that employee does is being
14 watched. It's not being watched the way you would
15 watch me. It's being watched to look at every
16 single detail. It's a precision type of approach.
17 That puts a lot of pressure on people. I find that
18 some people don't like that and don't think that
19 that's something they want the stress in their
20 lives, and they have choices and they decide to get
21 away from it. I think that's one -- one impact.

22 Over the last 15 years, the interest in
23 nuclear from schools has reduced and so the
24 candidates coming out of schools don't meet what I
25 would say are the types of entry criteria that they

1 used to, and so we find that the inputs or the
2 sources have started to shrink. And the military
3 itself, which is another source that we go to, has
4 also shrunk in available resources.

5 Q. You had mentioned that some of the entry-
6 level candidates that come in aren't necessarily,
7 for lack of a better term, you didn't say this, so
8 I apologize, I'm rephrasing, but not up to par or
9 subpar or whatever it might be?

10 A. Not experienced yet.

11 Q. Yeah, there you go. Case in point.
12 Anyway --

13 JUDGE FETCH: Not relevant, Mr. Norrell.

14 THE WITNESS: I'm sure you do well.

15 Q. (MR. NORRELL CONTINUING) Could the
16 company look at ways to invest in those employees
17 to make them, to grant them -- is there anything
18 that they can grant, in lieu of experience from the
19 company side, to bring them up to a level that you
20 would feel comfortable?

21 A. I think what you're asking is, is the
22 company participating in any kind of educational or
23 program alliances with schools or other types of
24 sources; is that what you're asking?

25 Q. That's one -- that's one way of looking at

1 it, or just what can the company do to help those
2 entry-level people get to the level that they need?

3 A. Yes, we do have. First, the company does
4 have -- we have very robust qualification programs
5 for all of our employees. Every single employee,
6 including me, is trained and qualified and receives
7 a qualification status for being able to perform
8 various types of things in the facility. They
9 range -- can range from a six-month period to as
10 much as a two-and-a-half-year time period for
11 someone to gain, I'll call it, additional
12 education, experience and then demonstration of
13 that experience before qualification is given.
14 Very similar to, say, a physician in an internship.

15 And so the company has those established
16 for engineers, for managers, for mechanics,
17 technicians, all of the different skill sets that
18 we use in the facilities. But as I said, it takes
19 time. If you see a loss with bringing in new,
20 that's a good thing, but it takes time for you to
21 be able to optimize the usage of those people, so
22 you're left with essentially having to go find that
23 gap filler with experience from other places until
24 your own come up to speed.

25 And so it's a combination, I want

1 external, plus experience as the right mix, I
2 think, for long-term operations of our facility.
3 Then on top of that, we do have now alliances and
4 programs with local universities, both on the
5 professional side and nonprofessional side, to, I
6 would say, create more career paths for people to
7 want to come into the nuclear facilities. And
8 we're starting to see some shift in that direction
9 positively. It's getting better, but it's a ways
10 to go yet.

11 Q. Is it fair to say that the company is
12 concerned about the long-term operations in lieu of
13 this lack of interest and having available workers?

14 A. Well, I would say that our concern is
15 having a long-term workforce, which is one reason
16 why we've increased our staffs a bit, was so that
17 knowing it takes several years to qualify, knowing
18 the -- I would say the retirement probabilities of
19 our workforce, we try to make sure that we're
20 accommodating that potential so that we keep a
21 stability in the long term of the pipeline for our
22 power plants. It's working very effectively, but
23 it is something we have to keep constant vigilance
24 on.

25 Q. You had mentioned the Fukushima event. Is

1 that the incident in Japan --

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. -- with the tidal wave? Are there any
4 similarities to environmental threats at Monticello
5 that they faced in Japan in that incident? What --
6 I'll leave the question there first.

7 A. First of all, I'm into event prevention,
8 not just event mitigation. The only place and the
9 only way to operate facilities is to prevent
10 situations that we're seeing on television
11 overseas. Is the possibility that we could have an
12 event that is like that? I would say that's very
13 low in probability.

14 And, quite frankly, the United States has
15 a very different operating philosophy than the
16 Japanese do. As an anecdotal example, I have run
17 some of these same accident scenarios in our
18 simulators, and with our mitigating strategies for
19 safety of the plant, for protection, we don't come
20 out with the same outcomes.

21 MR. NORRELL: I have no further questions,
22 Your Honor.

23 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you.

24 Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco?

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EXAMINATION

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BY MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO:

Q. Is the employee -- excuse me. Scratchy throat.

Attracting qualified employees and retaining them, is the incentive plan for that, for the nuclear portion of the business, the same as for the rest of the utility, or is there a special one for the nuclear employees?

A. We have a -- we're part of the whole, but there are some special attributes that have been applied for the nuclear side.

Q. And I apologize if this is buried in somebody's testimony someplace, but is there -- can you point to the cost difference in the rate case in the revenue requirement for the nuclear portion above and beyond the general portion?

A. I would ask -- I don't think I'm the correct witness for that. I would ask that one of the witnesses coming after me can answer that on the retention -- or, I mean, on the compensation program as a whole, including the nuclear piece.

MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: Okay. That's all I have. Thank you.

JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. All right. At

1 this time we'll go to the Commission. Commissioner
2 Fedorchak.

3 **EXAMINATION**

4 **BY COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK:**

5 Q. Tim, some comments have been made that
6 nuclear was less volatile from a regulatory
7 standpoint. You're talking about a lot of measures
8 needing to be taken because of regulations. So
9 tell me -- talk to me a little bit about whether
10 nuclear really is less or more volatile from a
11 regulatory standpoint, than say some of the fossil
12 fuels.

13 A. I don't know if I can say that nuclear is
14 more or less. As safety standards get redefined by
15 industry experiences, regulations change. I think
16 that's the case no matter what you're talking
17 about, whether you're talking about OSHA standards
18 for safety on humans or you're talking about
19 nuclear regulatory items or effluents from a fossil
20 plant. So the regulations are coming from -- at
21 least from the nuclear piece is redefining safety
22 as lessons learned come in and assuring that
23 similar instances don't occur.

24 Now, there is -- it's a moving target at
25 times. That's a true statement. Do I think it's

1 predictable? I think we understand the Fukushima
2 situation very clearly in the U.S. And the Nuclear
3 Regulatory Commission, I think, has done a very
4 good job in phasing approaches and having cost
5 benefits for doing the right things for the right
6 reasons. And so I see there are some increases
7 that are coming from those, but I see some level of
8 predictability also with that. That's the answer I
9 will provide.

10 Q. Do you think that we're going through a
11 period now where there's some new regulations that
12 are built on the lessons learned from that event
13 and then it will stabilize?

14 A. I don't have a crystal ball, but I would
15 tell you that the Fukushima experience is pretty
16 much through the regulatory new rule writing that
17 the NRC and Commissioners have been doing. There
18 are some that we know what they will look like, but
19 the rule hasn't been written, but we're already
20 anticipating what we think those changes or
21 expectations on our plants are. The NRC has
22 expected that all industry nuclear plants will
23 implement all of those items over the next five
24 years. And then at that point I would say this
25 situation, I think, is behind us.

1 Q. So more than 50 percent of the costs that
2 you're recovering here are focused on the nuclear
3 side. What -- and you obviously have determined
4 that this is a good investment. This is wise.
5 Tell us why. How did you guys determine this? Why
6 are you comfortable that investing this much in the
7 nuclear portfolio is a good investment at this
8 point?

9 A. Well, even with some of the rule changes,
10 when you look at a base load unit running 24/7, I
11 really don't change my workforce very often. I
12 mean, I have to have the right workforce and I have
13 to deal with turnover, but the labor force, the
14 maintenance costs associated with running the plant
15 are fairly predictable, assuming regulations don't
16 change a whole lot, but they're fairly predictable
17 to run the machine.

18 And when you look at that, which is a low
19 cost with the energy that you get from nuclear
20 fuel, it's still very, very competitive amongst all
21 other resources that are out there. It's clean and
22 it's extremely reliable, meaning it's very -- you
23 can count on it. I'll give you an example. The
24 Prairie Island Unit 2 reactor is now in day 500 of
25 continuous operation. That's a phenomenal

1 reliability statistic for base load units. And
2 that type of clean energy, that kind of reliability
3 is what we offer to the customers. And I
4 personally believe, the company believes that the
5 economics still show it as being a very good
6 investment for customers for the long term.

7 Q. Okay. Now, just to get, again, kind of
8 the big picture here, I was looking at the chart on
9 the drivers of the cost and it showed, I believe,
10 8.4 million, I believe were related to the nuclear.
11 And then in your testimony I can't find a chart
12 that breaks down that 8.4 million. I see a chart
13 that breaks down like 10.4 -- 10.7 nuclear
14 generation business area O&M cost, but am I
15 understanding these correctly? Is the 8.4 and the
16 10.7, are these the same figures? Where I can get
17 a breakdown of the nuclear components of the case,
18 the drivers?

19 A. I'm not sure the 8.4 that you're referring
20 to -- I'm sorry, that one I'm -- but the table, I'm
21 familiar with the table and I know what that is. I
22 don't know if there's been any adjustment. I can't
23 answer that.

24 Q. Well, let me -- the 8.4 is from this chart
25 on page 5 of Ms. -- -- of Laura's testimony at the

1 beginning. This one. Are you familiar with that?

2 A. I have seen it. I have not studied it.

3 Q. So should that be -- 8.4, should that be
4 10.7?

5 A. I'm sorry. I can't answer that question.

6 Q. Okay. Let me ask it this way. Is 10.7
7 the right number for total nuclear?

8 A. The 10.7 is what our changes from one year
9 to another year. Now, what that converts to in
10 actual change in rates, that, I'm sorry, I can't
11 give you that answer. What I'm explaining in that
12 testimony is what's the difference in the nuclear
13 cost from one year to another year and what was the
14 primary drivers for it.

15 Q. Okay. Then how do I get to that, from
16 that to how much of that percent -- how much of
17 that is into the rate case, the money that we're
18 seeking to recover?

19 A. I'm sorry. I'd have to refer to others to
20 help with that answer. I didn't make those
21 conversions. I don't know.

22 Q. Okay. Then let's talk a little bit about
23 employees, because that is a big driver, it sounds
24 like, in the costs. A lot of it is coming dow to
25 the employees, the cost of retaining them --

1 A. It is.

2 Q. -- and training them. Where are you --
3 where are your employees coming from? Where are
4 the training programs for these employees?

5 A. Well, the training programs are Xcel
6 training programs. So we have a combination of
7 hiring what I would say less experienced and using
8 our training programs to bring them up to an
9 experienced qualified level, and, quite frankly, is
10 going out to the industry and obtaining them who
11 already have the qualifications.

12 For example, the Kewaunee plant that shut
13 down in Wisconsin was a source for us to obtain
14 already trained and qualified people. The plant in
15 San Onofre in California is a second plant that we
16 actually were able to go out and recruit and bring
17 experienced, qualified people into our facility.
18 Those are two places that have been very successful
19 for us.

20 Q. So it's pretty much all on-the-job
21 training?

22 A. Yes, ma'am. A great portion of it is.

23 Q. What percent of your staff is it on-the-
24 job training versus, you know, nuclear engineers
25 and those folks that graduate from a four-year or

1 six-year program?

2 A. Speaking from experience, since I am an
3 engineer, I would say that you have to have a
4 degree to understand the business and understand
5 the technical aspects of it, but from the total
6 operation of the facility, it's maybe 10 percent of
7 what you get from our nuclear programs and the on-
8 the-job experience. Ninety percent comes from the
9 actual in-plant and in the job itself.

10 Q. Mm-hmm. Do you guys have recruiting
11 programs through the trade schools and the
12 universities to try to get in and bring in more
13 talent?

14 A. We do. We actually, as I had mentioned
15 earlier, Commissioner, that over the last couple of
16 years, we've had to help universities with
17 pipelines so that they structure their programs,
18 not only the four-year programs, but the two-year
19 associate programs. And most recently we've
20 interacted with the Institute of Nuclear Power for
21 the trade schools so that we can get welders and we
22 can get various types of other skills that are
23 essential, you know, for operating our facilities
24 for the long term. Those programs are starting to
25 infiltrate into their journeyman sessions, and

1 we're starting to see -- in fact, this past year we
2 had our first seven graduates that we were able to
3 get from that program and bring into our nuclear
4 facilities. So it's working, but it's got a ways
5 to go yet.

6 Q. Mm-hmm. Did this suddenly come up or
7 why does -- it sort of seems like the industry is a
8 little behind the eight ball on the staffing. Why
9 is this now such a big issue?

10 A. Well, as I said, there aren't too many --
11 I'll try to say this as delicately as I can since
12 I'm in the 50 category. There's either someone who
13 is 20 or 50 and in between not much. What's
14 happening is the people that have the -- there was
15 a period of time that there was not a lot of
16 recruiting, not a lot of what I would say -- there
17 was a good deal of stability and assumptions that I
18 think people would come into the business, and that
19 did not turn out to be true. In the last five to
20 eight years that recognition that the schools
21 aren't promoting nuclear like they used to,
22 computer science and those types of things are far
23 more exciting than some of the things that we do,
24 and the fact that the population is starting to
25 shrink with us that are in the higher ages, is

1 starting to show a deficit.

2 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: All right. That
3 concludes my questions.

4 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you, Commissioner.
5 Commissioner Kalk.

6 COMMISSIONER KALK: Thank you, Your Honor.

7 **EXAMINATION**

8 **BY COMMISSIONER KALK:**

9 Q. Thank you, Tim, for your testimony.

10 Interesting to bring up San Onofre. I got
11 a chance to tour that place. When did that close
12 down again, you said, they're all done now?

13 A. The announcement is already done. It's
14 already shut down.

15 Q. Fair enough. Just a couple questions for
16 you. The 2030ish -- you feel now that with the
17 improvements you've made, the plant will be able to
18 run until 2030; right?

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. I'll tell you, from my viewpoint, the ADP
21 to approve what you did to that plant was the
22 easiest decision I made as a Commission as far as
23 nuclear power. It's good power all the way around.

24 Is there something that we could do now
25 that would be able to extend the plant past 2030,

1 or is the limiting factor just the federal approval
2 of this facility?

3 A. Well, let me ask answer it this way. The
4 current regulatory process was a new plant is 40
5 years, a license extension is 20. Why those
6 numbers? I would say it was more those were
7 numbers that were pretty defensible for various
8 safety analyses on materials and that type of, I'll
9 say, structures. There is a great deal of energy
10 right now in licensing past -- past 60 years with
11 EPRI and NEI and some of it, I'll call it larger
12 utilities. My personal view is that we will see
13 nuclear plants going past 60 years, in other words,
14 40 plus 20. I expect that you will see past 60
15 become more likely in the next five to ten years.

16 Q. Is there a role that the North Dakota
17 Commission or Minnesota Commission could play to
18 help you extend those lifecycles? I mean, could we
19 then intervene on your behalf with the authorities
20 that grant those? It just -- I mean, we do that
21 all the time. We find a good energy source, we'll
22 say it's good for policy, good for the ratepayers
23 and we'll make sure it's around. Is this something
24 that we should be looking at now as the Commission
25 to start weighing in with the discussion?

1 A. Commissioner, obviously, I'm a nuclear-
2 type of person so I would always say that there's a
3 possibility. You know, I think the comment that
4 was made earlier about we have to look at the
5 economics, we have to look at the risk factors. We
6 have to look at, you know, regulatory environments.
7 It may or may not be the right decision in 2030. I
8 don't know. I'd like it to be out there in the
9 future. I'm not sure what the United States will
10 do without nuclear power, but it's certainly a
11 policy setting and how the Nuclear Regulatory
12 Commission looks at business is something I think
13 all of us should participate in some fashion to
14 help them shape policy most effectively.

15 Q. Okay. And then speaking of policy, you
16 talked in your testimony a little bit about the dry
17 cask storage issues. I see one of the D.C. Courts
18 now basically said Congress didn't have the right
19 to stop the moving forward of the storage issue,
20 something to that effect?

21 A. Yes. The specific issue was the Nuclear
22 Regulatory Commission decided that it was no longer
23 going to continue the licensing efforts of Yucca
24 Mountain. And they made that decision
25 independently of the Courts, I'll say, or the

1 federal rules or federal law. And the court system
2 said that the NRC didn't have that authority to
3 just say we're not going to do it, so they told
4 them they have to go back and continue the
5 licensing efforts with Yucca Mountain. Whether
6 that happens or not, I don't know.

7 Q. So if we are somehow able to keep this
8 plant going, is there a limiting time frame for the
9 current storage plan that will become the limiting
10 factor in this plant?

11 A. No. That's, I think, probably one reason
12 why there's some extended times on Yucca Mountain
13 and these kinds of long-term repositories, is
14 because both by testing and by actual operations,
15 dry cask storage has been proven to be extremely
16 safe and can go on for an extended period of time.
17 Well beyond probably what is currently licensed.
18 And I think many know that, and I think that's one
19 reason why it's taking time to come up with a
20 long-term storage, is because the existing methods
21 are very safe and very practical.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. So the answer is, I don't see that
24 influencing operations of our facilities.

25 Q. Okay. The -- toured the plant out there

1 at Monticello. The physical security, I understand
2 you have your own unique plan out there, but is the
3 cyber security setup different for the nuclear
4 plant than your other facilities, or is it all one
5 integrated security plan?

6 A. Nuclear is different. There is cyber
7 security for the company as a whole. However, the
8 Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued specific
9 cyber security directions for various types of
10 components and systems directed at nuclear power
11 plants as standalone laws and orders.

12 Q. So to get right to the punch line, so with
13 the physical upgrades that you've done, do you feel
14 you've done enough upgrades for the -- I just lost
15 my -- computer security, or is that something that
16 maybe you could use some more resources to upgrade?

17 A. We're well on our way. We have to be
18 completed with those by the second quarter of 2014
19 and that's the path that we're on, so we have
20 ourselves positioned to meet that.

21 COMMISSIONER KALK: Okay. Thank you for
22 your testimony.

23 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you, Commissioner.

24 Commissioner Christmann.

25 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Thank you, your

1 Honor.

2

EXAMINATION

3

BY COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN:

4

Q. Mr. O'Connor, how far are Prairie Island and Monticello apart geographically?

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6

A. Oh, I would say an hour and 45 minutes -- I drive a lot -- so I'd say many an hour 45 minutes, maybe around 100 miles.

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8

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Q. When we talked about the regulatory

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requirements for safety and, well, all kinds of

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requirements that are leading to these costs, are

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there state regulatory requirements that exceed the

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federal requirements that are part of this, or are

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state regulations not exceeding federal?

15

A. The latter is true. Nuclear power plants

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are governed by the code of federal regulations and

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they supersede any state item. Probably the only

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one area is effluent monitoring of the facility's

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water and air. The state criteria is what we

20

follow.

21

Q. Were there concessions made some years ago

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when one or both of these facilities needed more

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storage space, anything in order to get the state

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regulatory approval to add storage?

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A. I guess I'm not sure I can answer that

1 question. I don't know.

2 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Okay. I have no
3 further questions, Your Honor.

4 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you, Commissioner.

5 COMMISSIONER KALK: Your Honor, I would
6 maybe follow up on what Commissioner Christmann
7 was --

8 JUDGE FETCH: Okay. Commissioner Kalk.

9 **FURTHER EXAMINATION**

10 **BY COMMISSIONER KALK:**

11 Q. Did the Minnesota Public Utility
12 Commission have you guys hung up a little bit for a
13 while on these -- some extensions?

14 A. There has been -- are you talking about
15 extensions for license? There are several license.

16 Q. But the Minnesota PUC has more
17 jurisdiction over what you -- they have some hammer
18 over nuclear plants because you're physically in
19 Minnesota, it's not all federal jurisdiction?

20 A. For, I believe, dry cask storage that is a
21 true statement.

22 Q. Okay. So the State of Minnesota could
23 make a policy change that could make operations a
24 lot tougher, and that was some debate a while back,
25 I think?

1 Was it because of the -- we've heard about the way
2 the government in Japan kind of at the top-level
3 decisions when you can actually take action and
4 intervene and it seemed there was a lot of delay
5 that maybe then led to one disaster after another
6 that might have been curtailed sooner if they could
7 have gotten in there; is that what you're referring
8 to, or are you referring to like actual technical
9 steps?

10 A. All of the above.

11 Q. All of the above.

12 A. If I might, I can explain that a bit.

13 Q. Please.

14 A. If you take a step back and look at the
15 Fukushima situation, the first thing is that the
16 operating approaches is that in the U.S. every
17 operator that's on the boards that's managing the
18 reactor itself is federally licensed by the
19 government to take actions that they see fit in
20 order to reduce any kind of concern to health and
21 safety of the public. That's their primary
22 objective. They do that before they take an order
23 from me. In the Japanese society -- so
24 decisionmaking is left to the control room, who are
25 best suited to evaluate the situation and given the

1 different circumstances make the best decision.

2 In Japan that decisionmaking is not left
3 in the control room. It's, as you pointed out,
4 elevated outside of the control room to those who
5 have less firsthand knowledge. Delays did occur
6 and the situation got worse, not better. And when
7 actions did take, it was a little bit late. That's
8 one problem. After 9/11 in the you U.S., there
9 were a variety of different changes we took, both
10 in security and worst-case scenarios about our
11 nuclear facilities. That prompted us to change
12 again our methods of auxiliary equipment in the
13 event of a worst-case scenario. So let's say you
14 have a loss of power, nobody is coming to help you,
15 can you remedy the situation on your own?

16 The U.S. required in early years after
17 9/11 to put auxiliary equipment in to provide
18 additional power, to provide additional water and
19 to provide different methods for fire suppression
20 should we have any or all of these combinations to
21 keep the fuel covered at all times. And that's the
22 mission of the U.S., keep the fuel covered at all
23 times. That's, again, a different approach than
24 the Japanese took. They did not apply security
25 issues that we did from 9/11.

1 And then, finally, the U.S. went into
2 what's called beyond design basis situations. The
3 plants are designed for certain types of accidents,
4 but -- and we said, well, what if it goes past
5 that? So we created more procedures and more
6 training scenarios for our operators, our
7 maintenance and engineers for those types of
8 situations. That was all to try to take high
9 consequence but extremely low probability
10 situations and be sure that we could, in fact,
11 implement plans and not have an outcome that we're
12 experiencing overseas.

13 Those are the three larger differences
14 that I'm referring to as to why I believe those are
15 very low probability concerns or conditions in the
16 U.S. as compared to overseas.

17 Q. Thank you. That's an excellent
18 explanation of the security measures.

19 JUDGE FETCH: Ms. Valley, do you have any
20 questions?

21 MS. VALLEY: No, Your Honor.

22 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. Mr. Norrell, any
23 follow-up?

24 MR. NORRELL: No, Your Honor.

25 JUDGE FETCH: Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco?

1 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: No. Thank you.

2 JUDGE FETCH: Commissioners, any follow-
3 up? No follow-up. Thank you, Mr. O'Connor.

4 THE WITNESS: Thank you very much.

5 JUDGE FETCH: Okay. Is your next witness
6 going to be Sharon Koenig?

7 MS. VALLEY: Yes, Your Honor.

8 JUDGE FETCH: All right. We're going to
9 take about a ten-minute break here, give the court
10 reporter a chance to refresh.

11 (Recess was taken.)

12 JUDGE FETCH: We're back on the record.
13 And the time is about 2:44 p.m., Central Time.

14 And at this time, Ms. Valley, I believe
15 you were calling Sharon -- is it Koenig?

16 MS. VALLEY: Thank you, Your Honor. It's
17 Sharon Koenig.

18 JUDGE FETCH: Koenig. Thank you.

19 Ms. Koenig. Ms. Koenig, I believe you
20 were present earlier when I instructed about
21 penalties for perjury, were you not?

22 THE WITNESS: Yes, I was.

23 JUDGE FETCH: All right. Thank you.

24 Please raise your right hand.

25 Do you solemnly swear the testimony you're

1 about to give shall be the truth under pains and
2 penalties of perjury?

3 THE WITNESS: I do.

4 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. And Ms. Paulson
5 is passing out your witness statement, I believe,
6 and this will be -- I have to look at my list here
7 to see what number we're at -- NSP Exhibit 26.

8 And, Mr. Norrell, do you have any
9 objections to this exhibit?

10 MR. NORRELL: No, Your Honor.

11 JUDGE FETCH: All right. NSP 26 is
12 admitted.

13 Please proceed, Ms. Valley.

14 **SHARON KOENIG,**

15 being first duly sworn, was examined and testified
16 as follows:

17 **DIRECT EXAMINATION**

18 **BY MS. VALLEY:**

19 Q. Ms. Koenig, your prefiled written
20 testimony has been stipulated into the record in
21 this proceeding. Do you have any corrections to
22 your written testimony today?

23 A. No.

24 Q. Would you please proceed with your opening
25 statement?

1 A. Yes. My name is Sharon Koenig, and I hold
2 the position of Director of Compensation for Xcel
3 Energy. My purpose in this proceeding is to
4 provide testimony to demonstrate the reasonableness
5 of the company's annual incentive program and
6 nuclear retention program costs. For individual
7 but related reasons, these programs are necessary
8 to attract, retain and engage highly-skilled
9 employees that help provide reliable electric
10 service throughout our system each day.

11 Delivering safe and reliable electric
12 service to our North Dakota customers is dependent
13 upon attracting talented employees to our company
14 in the present and upon planning for the long-term
15 success of the utility. I'm concerned that we
16 would not be able to attract and retain capable
17 employees in a consistent manner unless we continue
18 to offer total cash compensation, meaning a
19 combination of base salary and incentive
20 compensation that is competitive with what is
21 offered elsewhere in the market. We therefore
22 utilize industry best practices to compare our
23 total cash compensation for a position to what is
24 offered in the marketplace for the same or similar
25 jobs. By that objective measure, we know that

1 without annual incentive, our employees' cash
2 compensation would be 14 to 17 percent below that
3 which comparable utilities pay. That would be like
4 paying our employees \$85 for a job that elsewhere
5 would pay \$100.

6 Furthermore, the annual incentive is a
7 prevalent compensation tool used by corporations
8 and utilities alike for the dual purposes of
9 motivating employees to attain business goals that
10 benefit customers and managing the overall cost of
11 employee compensation. Because incentive
12 compensation must be newly earned each year, and
13 because certain employee benefit costs increase as
14 base pay amounts increase, our annual incentive is
15 more cost- effective than providing cash
16 compensation solely through annual -- through base
17 salary. As a human resources professional, I'm
18 concerned about any potential inability to recover
19 incentive compensation costs that are designed to
20 help us fairly compensate and motivate employees,
21 and at the same time serve to manage the overall
22 cost of employee compensation.

23 To further manage costs and provide value
24 for North Dakota customers, we are not seeking 100
25 percent of our annual incentive costs. Instead, we

1 propose to cap our recovery of these costs at 25
2 percent of base pay. This cap essentially
3 precludes rate recovery of costs of providing
4 incentive compensation to executive-level
5 employees, while recognizing that it is reasonable
6 to recover the cost of incentives for those skilled
7 employees in a variety of other jobs so they have
8 the opportunity to receive market-level cash
9 compensation. We have also aligned our annual
10 incentive program with the goals that benefit our
11 customers, such as safety and reliability
12 standards. For each of these reasons, I believe
13 that our annual incentive program provides
14 significant overall benefits to our customers, that
15 program costs are reasonable both in the nature and
16 the amount of the costs and that rate recovery in
17 North Dakota is appropriate.

18 Similarly, our nuclear incentive programs
19 are designed to help us retain employees who are in
20 key positions in our nuclear business. My
21 testimony provides information about our recent
22 experiences with critical nuclear employees leaving
23 the company and describes the limited pool of
24 skilled nuclear industry employees for which we
25 compete. While we have had some success when

1 utilizing retention programs for our nuclear
2 programs, we have struggled to hire needed
3 employees where other utilities were able to
4 implement retention programs ahead of us. In
5 combination with the annual incentive, our nuclear
6 retention programs align employee interests with
7 nuclear operational goals, reduce the significant
8 costs of employee turnover, and ensure employee
9 stability in this particularly complex and highly
10 unique area of our business.

11 MS. VALLEY: Thank you. Ms. Koenig is
12 available for cross.

13 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you, Ms. Valley.

14 Mr. Norrell, questions?

15 MR. NORRELL: Thank you, Your Honor.

16 **CROSS-EXAMINATION**

17 **BY MR. NORRELL:**

18 Q. Ms. Koenig, how long have you been
19 employed by Xcel or NSP?

20 A. I actually started with the company
21 earlier this year, in March.

22 Q. Did the other company -- did you work for
23 another company prior to coming to Xcel?

24 A. Yes. I've been working in the
25 compensation field for about the last 13 years at

1 other corporations in the Minneapolis marketplace,
2 and then in addition to my full corporate career
3 since college.

4 Q. Okay. Did any of the other companies you
5 worked for have incentive programs?

6 A. Yes, all of them did.

7 Q. And how did they compare to the one that
8 we're discussing here with Xcel -- or NSP? I'm
9 sorry.

10 A. Well, I can say that all of the other
11 companies that I've worked at that had -- in the
12 compensation field had incentive programs that had
13 predetermined goals that they set out each year and
14 a certain number of employees were eligible for
15 those opportunities to pay out incentive. And
16 while that varied from industry to industry, it was
17 a really prevalent practice that was in addition to
18 paying base salary, such as increasing with merit
19 pay, and so on.

20 Q. And is that how the NSP incentive pay is
21 generally structured or structured in general?

22 A. Well, our compensation philosophy is that
23 we pay -- we look to median pay practices and look
24 to total cash compensation that is comparable in
25 our utility company market where we compete for

1 talent. So we do look to salary surveys that
2 compare us with other utility companies.

3 Q. Okay. Could you explain, kind of in a
4 nutshell, what the compensation, the incentive
5 compensation policy is for NSP? What kind of --
6 you mentioned certain things need to be met. What
7 needs to be met, what kind of goals?

8 A. I can explain our general parameters of
9 our annual incentive program. We call it AIP, and
10 it is the short-term incentive that we utilize to
11 motivate employee behavior with performance
12 metrics. So it is an annual incentive. It is
13 different from a bonus. It is really setting out
14 predetermined metrics that are in place.

15 And we have really three elements that we
16 look to when they set these performance criteria.
17 We look to corporate level metrics or scorecard,
18 business unit scorecard metrics and, also, an
19 individual component that is tied to the individual
20 employee's performance.

21 Q. What kind of items would go under the
22 individual component?

23 A. Well, the individual component would be
24 for employees similar to other companies. We have
25 a performance rating where we assess the

1 individual's performance throughout the whole
2 performance cycle. And, generally, that's a fiscal
3 year in the case of our company. And between the
4 individual and their leader or their department
5 they work for or their business unit, there are
6 several individual goals that they aspire to
7 throughout the year. And so, like many other
8 companies, we have performance ratings and those
9 performance ratings are assessed and, really,
10 through a performance management system they're
11 discussed throughout the year, but mostly at a
12 year-end that assessment is done through an annual
13 performance review in which we rate our employees.

14 Q. Do you do any sort of surveying of your
15 employees, or is it part of this annual review as
16 to their mentality within the workforce, how do
17 they like working for NSP and what things do they
18 like working about that -- about NSP?

19 A. Not specifically to my department in
20 compensation, but in HR, in general, we do employee
21 engagement surveys at our organization, and that
22 speaks to a number of characteristics, including
23 their engagement level and their satisfaction
24 level.

25 Q. Do the engagement level and satisfaction

1 level have any sort of impact on their
2 compensation? Is there any tradeoff there, or any
3 correlation between the two?

4 A. Well, we do certainly want our employees
5 to respond with their engagement scores so we
6 certainly promote them engaging in those surveys
7 throughout the year. We do them annually and on
8 occasion we also do pulse surveys in the middle of
9 the year. But your question is specific, I
10 believe, to is there any impact related to
11 compensation. And, in fact, to be an employer of
12 choice, one thing that we strive for is to make
13 sure that we do have engaged and motivated
14 employees, and so one of the scorecard metrics that
15 we have, a very small portion of our corporate
16 scorecard, is related to employee engagement.

17 Q. Do you guys look to other -- besides
18 compensation, do you look to other things to help
19 keep employees engaged, such as opportunities to
20 learn or develop their career, flexible hours,
21 recognition, any of that sort of issue?

22 A. Yes, many of the things that you mentioned
23 are things that we certainly provide to make sure
24 that we have a good total rewards experience, and
25 not only total rewards, but also really what is

1 that work experience for our employees. And so you
2 mentioned a couple items like recognition. We do
3 have a recognition program where we are able to
4 give kind of on-the-spot thanks and appreciation
5 for a job well done. We also offer development and
6 training. And, really, as part of that performance
7 management process, one element that leaders are
8 held accountable to for their employees is to make
9 sure that they're looking to continue to develop
10 their employees as well. So there's a continual
11 check-in between a leader and their employee on not
12 only performance, but also how is their development
13 plan going, and there are many training
14 opportunities that are available to our employees
15 to allow them to continue to develop.

16 Q. Are there any sort of outside studies,
17 third-party studies, that you're aware of, that
18 have been conducted to determine how an employee's
19 work experience at NSP compares to an employee at
20 Ottertail or other like-minded companies?

21 A. I'm not sure that I'm aware of those
22 studies about how our engagement scores compare to
23 other engagement scores in the utility industry,
24 but because I haven't heard of them doesn't mean
25 that they might not exist.

1 Q. There was a lot of talk earlier about the
2 Wisconsin Commission disallowing the incentive
3 payments. Are you familiar with that situation,
4 and can you testify to any reasons why Wisconsin
5 would have disallowed those?

6 A. I can tell you that I'm familiar with the
7 matter regarding Wisconsin and I know that -- while
8 I'm not involved in the details of that, of that
9 case, I am aware that that decision about allowance
10 of AIP was probably done in connection with an
11 array of other decisions, not just solely on the
12 purpose of whether AIP should be allowable for
13 recovery, so that's about the extent I'm familiar
14 with that case. I'm not involved in that one
15 specifically.

16 Q. So you don't know what the particular
17 concerns that Wisconsin had with the AIP in
18 Wisconsin, in that Wisconsin case were?

19 A. I individually don't know. I'm sorry.

20 Q. You've mentioned, and it's been mentioned
21 in your testimony, that the incentive pay is
22 offered each and every year, that employees
23 essentially have to re-earn that; is that correct?

24 A. Yes. It is what we call variable pay
25 versus fixed pay, which is part of one's annual

1 base salary. So incentive pay is what we call
2 variable, meaning they do have to re-earn that
3 opportunity for performance outcomes.

4 Q. In your rebuttal testimony, there's
5 conversation about the nuclear incentive programs.
6 Are those structured under the same kind of
7 umbrella or guidelines as the regular AIP?

8 A. Well, what I can explain a little further
9 is that the retention program was put in place. It
10 is a compensation tool that's used to make sure
11 that we are looking at skilled and critical talent
12 that we have in our workforce and making sure that
13 we work towards retaining them. So it is a
14 compensation tool that we use called retention to
15 make sure that we're putting some focused area on
16 those employees. However, it's not directly
17 associated with a broader aspect of our annual
18 incentive program, if I understood your question
19 correctly.

20 Q. I guess my question kind of in line with
21 if AIP needs to be re-earned every year, your
22 testimony talks about long-term incentives to
23 nuclear employees. How do those two mesh? If it
24 needs to be re-earned, how can you have a long-term
25 incentive?

1 A. Well, let me explain a little further
2 about the construct of that nuclear retention
3 program. So it is, in part, performance based, so
4 setting aside the annual incentive program for a
5 moment, which is an annual opportunity that we
6 provide eligible employees, what occurred with our
7 nuclear retention efforts would be that we put in
8 place certain -- for certain key positions as
9 Mr. O'Connor explained further -- or earlier in his
10 testimony, that we wanted to make sure that we were
11 retaining them and making sure we continue to have
12 that good investment in their development and that
13 continuity in their work with us. So we put in
14 place a variety of different mechanisms in place
15 with that retention. We used a time-based cash
16 component that was put in place to make sure that
17 we have some continuity, but more importantly we
18 put in place some performance-based awards in
19 addition to that, that were connected to KPIs, key
20 performance indicators, that they coordinated with
21 their leadership. The LTI that was given to them
22 called retention stock units, that is also a
23 performance- based award. So it is not -- it is
24 stock-related. It is not cash. And that is
25 triggered around a three-year performance cycle on

1 EPS.

2 Q. Okay. On page 6 of your testimony, at
3 line 23, you state that there's a cost savings that
4 occurs in the form of reduced cash compensation.

5 Do you have any sort of charts or anything
6 that you can show how much money is saved upfront
7 in the form of reduced cash compensation, or do you
8 know what that dollar amount is?

9 A. I don't have that calculation with me,
10 but, you know, if we are providing incentive
11 compensation, for example, at a percentage of let's
12 just say 10 percent AIP opportunity of someone's
13 base pay, if we weren't providing an annual
14 incentive plan opportunity for them to re-earn that
15 award each year, if we were to transfer that to
16 their base salaries, it would be about a 10 percent
17 difference, because we do strive in our
18 compensation philosophy to pay total cash
19 compensation at median pay practices. So if that
20 can give you a good -- if that gives you a good
21 gauge of what difference that might be, that would
22 show an individual kind of employee example.

23 Q. So then is your rate -- your base pay is
24 lower than what the median is?

25 A. Can you restate that question, please?

1 Q. You mentioned the incentive compensation.
2 I guess my question is, so you start the person
3 with a lower base pay, their cash compensation is
4 going to be lower than what their peers elsewhere
5 might be receiving; is that correct? Did I
6 understand you correctly?

7 A. If I could clarify that a little further,
8 that's not exactly what I meant by that so let me
9 break it out a little further.

10 When we talk about total cash
11 compensation, that is data that we are able to look
12 to and attain from third-party salary surveys. We
13 also receive information in those surveys about
14 base salary information. So you really see all
15 components of what is being delivered
16 competitively; base pay, annual incentive, and then
17 the sum of those two would be called total cash
18 compensation.

19 And I believe you were making a statement
20 do we start people lower on the base salary. We
21 don't have that philosophy, but what we do is, we
22 want to make sure that we're setting our salary
23 structures based on what we are seeing delivered
24 compared to those market studies as base salary
25 levels and then we look to set our incentive plan

1 target opportunities also consistent with what
2 we're seeing in the surveys.

3 So our entire compensation philosophy is
4 to make sure that we're monitoring what our median
5 pay practice is and we look to see that total
6 package, which is called total cash compensation,
7 for the majority of our employees.

8 Q. Have there been any years recently where
9 the company has not provided AIP to employees?

10 A. Well, I'm -- as you noted earlier, I'm new
11 to the company, but what I understand is that while
12 the AIP, the annual incentive program, has been an
13 opportunity that's been offered, I believe there
14 was a prior year that was not paid out, but I don't
15 have the specifics -- specifics of that with me.

16 Q. Okay. Is there still an annual cost of
17 living pay increase or something comparable to that
18 for NSP employees aside from the AIP?

19 A. No, I'm not familiar with that. When we
20 structure our market-based compensation programs,
21 we do set those programs up for our non-bargaining
22 employees, and so I'm not aware of any historical
23 cost of living adjustment that would also have been
24 added on to that for our non-bargaining employees.

25 Q. On page 7, line 4 of your testimony, you

1 state that incentive compensation tends to reduce
2 benefit costs. How does that work?

3 A. Sure. I can explain that a little
4 further. If we weren't able to provide the
5 program, including our annual incentive program, in
6 order to continue to retain our talent and motivate
7 people and attract new talent to the company, we
8 would still look to those market surveys to provide
9 median competitive total cash compensation. So if
10 we didn't have our AIP, for example, available to
11 us and we, you know, just hypothetically paid
12 everything in base salaries, we would really be
13 raising the cost of the total administrative costs
14 of our company because an employee's base salary is
15 a factor in how we determine other benefits
16 payable, such as on our pension or certain
17 insurance coverages that we have or opportunities
18 in our health and welfare plans. And so,
19 ultimately, that employee's base salary can be a
20 factor in determining those other costs. So we see
21 that as if we didn't have the AIP and we still had
22 our objective to pay median total compensation,
23 total cash compensation, we'd really be probably
24 raising those costs of the organization in our
25 total rewards program.

1 Q. Do you know or do you have a document that
2 can show how much savings there are in this term in
3 reducing the benefit costs on a yearly basis
4 because of the AIP program?

5 A. I haven't prepared that so I don't have
6 that number or that document.

7 MR. NORRELL: Your Honor, Advocacy Staff
8 would like to request, if it's at all possible, a
9 document that goes to that effect. The two
10 questions, the one to see the savings in the form
11 of reduced cash compensation and maybe in the same
12 one the reduced -- the reduction in benefit costs
13 as a late-filed exhibit.

14 JUDGE FETCH: Savings in the form of
15 reduced cash compensation and a reduction in
16 benefits cost --

17 MR. NORRELL: Yes, Your Honor.

18 JUDGE FETCH: -- is that what you said?
19 All right.

20 Ms. Valley, any objection to having an
21 exhibit prepared?

22 MS. VALLEY: Just one moment, Your Honor.

23 Thank you, Your Honor. I guess one
24 question I would likely like to pose to Ms. Koenig
25 is if she understands --

1 JUDGE FETCH: Go ahead.

2 MS. VALLEY: -- what's being asked and if
3 she thinks that this is something that they can put
4 together. As she explained, there are a lot of
5 programs affected by this and thousands of
6 employees, so it's a little -- it sounds like a
7 somewhat complicated calculation so I wanted to
8 clarify.

9 THE WITNESS: So what I can address is
10 that while I understand the methodology of how that
11 would be put together, I think you are correct,
12 Ms. Valley, that all of those aspects would not be
13 in my total control of putting them together. I
14 guess I would need to make sure I understand from
15 my other colleagues who are in the retirement
16 benefits and health and welfare to figure out how
17 to calculate that. I would not be the expert to be
18 able to pull all that data together myself solely.

19 MS. VALLEY: We certainly want to make
20 this a full and complete record and provide all of
21 the information that the Commission would like to
22 see in making its final determination. I guess
23 with respect to this particular request because it
24 does sort of stretch across a variety of areas that
25 perhaps maybe there be some acknowledging what

1 Mr. Norrell has identified here as the rate
2 request, but maybe some flexibility to work with
3 them if there are some modifications as we identify
4 what information we have and how it can be compiled
5 for this exhibit.

6 JUDGE FETCH: Sure. Are you saying,
7 Ms. Valley, that it seems overly broad and you're
8 not sure what specifics are being requested?

9 MS. VALLEY: Well, it sounds like what
10 Mr. Norrell would like are the savings that we
11 experience by reduced base pay and having that
12 separation between base pay and AIP and how that
13 also carries over into reduced benefit costs. And
14 I just want to be clear that because we don't have
15 all of the individuals with that information
16 currently present, I don't myself, and it sounds
17 like Ms. Koenig doesn't know what the complexity
18 and feasibility of pulling that analysis together
19 is, so I just want to make sure that everybody is
20 aware that we'll certainly make our best efforts,
21 but as we identify what that information might be,
22 we may need to work with Advocacy Staff to come up
23 with something that is representative of what
24 they're looking for.

25 JUDGE FETCH: Sure. You're asking for

1 maybe an opportunity to work with staff to get more
2 clearly identified what information they're looking
3 for and what the parameters are.

4 Does that sound reasonable, Mr. Norrell,
5 or can you shed a little more light on it?

6 MR. NORRELL: Well, the testimony just
7 states in numerous places it saves costs. We'd
8 just like to see in what way, but we would be
9 willing to work with Xcel, NSP to get something.
10 We'd like to see some numbers, other than just
11 stating broadly it saves costs.

12 JUDGE FETCH: Okay. All right. Sounds
13 like there's some agreement.

14 Sure. Commissioner Kalk.

15 COMMISSIONER KALK: I was thinking the
16 same thing. It would sure be nice if you've got
17 your bargaining employees, your non-bargaining
18 employees, different management. I wouldn't think
19 all of the employees, but some classes, this type
20 of class employee you might save 8 percent, this
21 class employee you might save 2 percent, this class
22 you might not save anything. I don't know if that
23 would be overly complex to break your employees
24 into their classes, which are probably already
25 defined. I don't know if that muddies the water.

1 I don't think -- I think you're just trying to get
2 a feel for -- to quantify some of these things.

3 MR. NORRELL: Yeah. I guess are we
4 looking at a minute cost savings here with AIP?
5 Are we looking at this class of organized labor
6 employees, for example, are we looking at 8
7 percent, 2 percent? Nothing, you know, too overly
8 complex.

9 JUDGE FETCH: So you're saying you don't
10 necessarily need to see, you know, 2, 3, 4,000
11 employees, you know, broken out on a chart and what
12 each of the savings are, but something, you know, a
13 lot more condensed than that, and as I think --
14 Commissioner Kalk, I think that's a good way to
15 explain that what you would be looking for is kind
16 of classes and, basically, the information savings
17 in that manner. But, again, working, you know,
18 with staff to kind of see that this is -- you're
19 getting something usable. All right?

20 That would be a late-filed exhibit,
21 obviously, since they need to compile the
22 information.

23 MR. NORRELL: Certainly.

24 JUDGE FETCH: And I will admit that as
25 Exhibit E, and I'll just write up a description.

1 All right. Thank you. Mr. Norrell.

2 MR. NORRELL: Thank you, Your Honor.

3 Q. (MR. NORRELL CONTINUING) On page 3 of
4 your testimony you state that the Wisconsin
5 decision regarding the incentive pay is under
6 review. And I know you already kind of spoke to
7 this.

8 Do you know any details about what is
9 exactly under review about that?

10 A. No. I'm sorry. I don't have any further
11 insights on it.

12 MR. NORRELL: Okay. I have no further
13 questions.

14 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you.

15 Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco?

16 **EXAMINATION**

17 **BY MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO:**

18 Q. Who would know the answer to the under
19 review question? That was one of my questions
20 also. Under review by the company or Wisconsin, or
21 who would know who is here today from NSP?

22 THE WITNESS: Ms. Valley, do you have any
23 suggestions who may have more insights on that?
24 I'm sorry. I don't know.

25 MS. VALLEY: Your Honor, to the extent --

1 I actually maybe would like a little bit more
2 clarification of what they're looking for in terms
3 of the Wisconsin decision. That is included as an
4 attachment to Ms. McCarten's testimony, which lays
5 out the decisionmaking of that Commission.

6 JUDGE FETCH: Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco, could
7 you restate your question, rephrase it?

8 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: My question was -- I
9 mean, I understand that the case is attached to
10 McCarten's testimony. I looked at the case. But I
11 didn't -- I did also have the same question about
12 it being -- the statement that it was under review.
13 And I asked, because you just answered Mr. Norrell
14 that you didn't know what "under review" meant, and
15 I'd like to know if anybody at NSP or in the room
16 can answer the question, what does "under review"
17 mean?

18 JUDGE FETCH: Are you asking the attorney
19 or the witness?

20 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: I'm asking -- the
21 witness has already answered that she does not
22 know. And I am asking the attorney to tell us if
23 there's another witness who can answer that
24 question or if the attorney can express what "under
25 review" means.

1 JUDGE FETCH: Okay. Ms. Valley?

2 MS. VALLEY: Thank you, Your Honor. And
3 perhaps we could -- as Ms. Koenig is not able to
4 respond to that question right now, we'll follow up
5 and maybe in our next break we'll identify who
6 could answer that question going forward.

7 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: Thank you.

8 JUDGE FETCH: All right. Thank you.

9 Q. (MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO CONTINUING:) And you
10 did previously respond that you weren't familiar
11 with the decision in Wisconsin, but having looked
12 at that decision, and it can speak for itself, but
13 the Commission, Wisconsin Commission, says it's too
14 inextricably linked, the performance, the stock
15 performance -- or the return performance, I should
16 say, is too linked to the plan for the Commission
17 to approve it.

18 What I would like to know is your
19 description of the linkage between the plan and
20 company performance.

21 A. Well, I can explain my review of the
22 annual incentive program and what those metrics
23 are. I can explain further that it is based on
24 three types of KPIs that are put together based on
25 scorecards. There's a corporate scorecard.

1 Q. Excuse me. But "KPI" means what?

2 A. Key performance indicator. And so those
3 are generally goals that are set that are
4 monitoring performance and leaders select what
5 those goals are as they are applicable to their
6 business. So there are corporate scorecard key
7 performance indicators. There are business unit
8 key performance indicators that are structured, and
9 then the third component would be the individual
10 performance of the employees. So the AIP is
11 structured to be a performance-based incentive and
12 it takes into account those three areas. And
13 individuals are weighted on them separately and
14 then there is also a funding factor that is related
15 to a minimum EPS target, so that is a funding
16 factor that makes sure that we have affordability
17 to pay the annual incentive each year.

18 Q. And which of those are tied to the
19 company's performance as far as return -- earnings?

20 A. If your question is -- is your question
21 whether the EPS is tied to corporate performance?
22 The answer is yes.

23 Q. Yes. And I was asking you to tell me, for
24 the record, which of the factors you just mentioned
25 is that factor, that first one, corporate

1 performance, not the business unit performance or
2 the individual?

3 A. The funding factor ability applies to the
4 corporate scorecard. But what I may add, too, is
5 that that minimum threshold of EPS needs to be met
6 in order for any payout under the AIP to any
7 employee.

8 Q. What is the North Dakota precedent for the
9 company on incentive pay?

10 A. I believe in -- we are asking for an
11 opportunity to get recovery on annual incentive
12 program up to a cap of 25 percent of base salaries.
13 I believe historically it was up to 15 percent.

14 Q. And for all employees or for a portion of
15 the employees? That question applies to what
16 you're asking for and what the North Dakota
17 precedent is.

18 A. We are asking for recovery on annual
19 incentive program up to a cap of 25 percent of base
20 salaries for those employees who are eligible.

21 Q. For everyone who is on the incentive plan?

22 A. That's correct.

23 Q. And is the North Dakota precedent 15
24 percent for everyone or 15 percent for a smaller
25 group?

1 A. I'm sorry. I don't have the history to
2 answer that question.

3 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: I would like to add
4 that to the list of questions that NSP should
5 answer when they figure out who can answer that,
6 please.

7 Q. (MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO CONTINUING) Is it
8 impossible to pay only base pay, your total
9 compensation as a base pay? Is it impossible to
10 have a plan that only pays that, not incentive, but
11 still be tied to performance?

12 A. I think your question is relating to if we
13 look at only -- if we only paid our exempt
14 employees base salary and not an annual incentive
15 opportunity, I believe your question is, are you
16 able to tie that to performance? We wouldn't be
17 able to -- I mean, certainly that's a design
18 question. And I guess, certainly, what we look to,
19 how we hold employees accountable for performance
20 with their base pay is something that we deliver in
21 an annual merit review. So performance ratings do
22 impact individuals on their base salary with
23 respect to their individual performance rating
24 every year. And so, in fact, today for our base
25 salaries, people are impacted by their performance

1 rating, but if you wanted to design a program that
2 is based on broader group metrics, I think it might
3 be a little difficult to do that just based on base
4 salary.

5 Q. Aren't the problems -- I mean, anybody who
6 has ever managed anybody, I think, would know the
7 answer to this. Aren't the problems exactly the
8 same, the challenges of tying pay to performance
9 the same whether you're paying base pay or you're
10 paying base plus incentive?

11 A. Well, there are -- I'm sorry. Can you
12 restate your question?

13 Q. The challenges of trying to tie pay to
14 performance are the same, are they not, whether you
15 are only trying to do it as a base salary or trying
16 to do it as an incentive plan? The challenges, the
17 hurdles, the hard part of doing it is the same, is
18 it not?

19 A. Well, I guess I would respond to that
20 that, you know, certainly doing performance
21 management and applying performance ratings to
22 employees' performance throughout the year is a
23 challenge for any business leader, but there are
24 ways that you could do it objectively and,
25 actually, when you look at performance-based

1 incentives like an annual incentive program and you
2 have quantifiable, objective scorecard metrics, you
3 actually have something to look to that is a little
4 bit more objective versus subjective.

5 So when I look to how we rate our
6 employees and we assess what they should receive
7 for a merit increase and whether they earn that
8 merit increase each year based on their performance
9 rating, that is based on providing leaders with
10 good training about how to assess performance, but
11 it is a bit subjective, versus when we look at
12 performance metrics that are outlined in an annual
13 incentive program, those are based on quantifiable
14 things that we can measure. So I guess I would say
15 that it's a little easier to really conduct a
16 pay-for- performance culture when we have
17 quantifiable methods to look to versus subjective.

18 Q. Thank you. I had the same question as
19 Mr. Norrell about the cost benefit versus the cost
20 savings, but I have a follow-up question even
21 though I'm looking forward to that exhibit.

22 And that is, doesn't the company need to
23 know if there's going to be a cost savings before
24 it decides to go to an incentive pay plan? I mean,
25 isn't that the question the company should be

1 asking itself initially?

2 A. Yes, that is part of an analysis that one
3 would do if you haven't already created an annual
4 incentive program. If you were an employer and you
5 were looking to how to restructure or redo
6 compensation programs, yes, any type of modeling is
7 a good thing to conduct if you're deciding how
8 shall I invest our dollars, should I put them into
9 fixed pay such as base salaries versus variable
10 pay, such as annual incentives, versus even
11 long-term incentives. But I think what designers
12 do when they look at how to construct a market
13 competitive pay package, we look to what are those
14 drivers that are going to provide the operations of
15 the company with the best outcomes.

16 And there are many good reasons why we
17 have base salaries and we look every year to how an
18 employee is performing and we give them the
19 opportunity to earn a merit increase. However, the
20 benefits of doing an annual incentive plan are what
21 we talked about earlier, which is you have to
22 re-earn that outcome every year, but it also drives
23 higher levels of performance. You can very much
24 distinguish those employees who are really going
25 above and beyond and performing well versus

1 employees who are performing more at just baseline
2 levels. So there are a lot of reasons why
3 incentive plans are put in place, to distinguish
4 performance, but it's also so the company can
5 achieve higher than planned performance outcomes.

6 Q. And that's what we're asking. The
7 company, that should be a continually ongoing
8 assessment of whether it's worth sticking with this
9 plan or not, correct, so the company should be
10 providing that information to us, and I guess I'm
11 thinking it shouldn't be that hard to come up with
12 if the company is looking at it each year, is this
13 still the plan we want to use, should we redesign
14 it, is it producing the results we think, is it
15 producing the cost savings or the performance.
16 There should be some way that the company can give
17 us that information.

18 A. Well, and what I would add to you, and I
19 know you had requested this information as did the
20 other gentleman for additional followup, but what I
21 can respond to about should the company be looking
22 at the design of how we deliver pay, we do that
23 annually and we do get information out of surveys
24 to find out with companies similar in our size, in
25 our utility industry, what is that mix of pay that

1 we're delivering, and we do see that it's very
2 prevalent to have both base salaries, incentive
3 opportunity, and on certain levels at executives or
4 even mid management and higher, long-term
5 incentives in the form of stock or other
6 performance-based incentives. So we do assess that
7 each year and find out if that is a prevalent
8 practice in companies similar to our size.

9 Q. And then do you also assess in any summary
10 fashion the productivity changes? Is that
11 something that you could provide?

12 A. Well, one thing that these key performance
13 indicators that we mentioned, KPIs, those are used
14 in our annual incentive program but, they're used
15 for much more at our company as well. They assess
16 how we're performing and how we're providing
17 service to our customers and how the business is
18 operating. So those are activities that business
19 leaders are going with to assess how is performance
20 on safety, reliability and other business operating
21 activity, and they do assess whether they are
22 making improvements in those areas. And so I think
23 that speaks to your question about are we seeing
24 that there is a gain or a good outcome in providing
25 those types of performance.

1 Q. It does, but can you produce any
2 supporting documentation that would be simple -- I
3 mean, that would be clear and simple data to
4 support the assertion? I don't know what the
5 company might produce that you could turn into us
6 so that we could see what you're saying is
7 happening.

8 A. And perhaps that could be something that
9 we could look to to help provide you with some
10 background there, but other companies like ours who
11 practice market-based compensation, they do similar
12 steps that we do each year. We look to third-party
13 surveys to find out is this a prevalent practice,
14 the mix of pay that we're delivering, who we
15 deliver pay to and in what forms, and what are
16 those median pay practices, so other companies that
17 are doing that kind of activity are kind of
18 conducting the same steps we are when we say that
19 we're market-based. We're looking to those
20 surveys.

21 And I think what you're asking for is
22 specifically the quantifiable outcomes, but I think
23 that's a little bit beyond the compensation design
24 that we look to and how we set these compensation
25 programs up.

1 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: Okay. Thank you.
2 That's all.

3 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. At this time
4 then, we'll go to the Commission.
5 Commissioner Fedorchak.

6 **EXAMINATION**

7 **BY COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK:**

8 Q. Sharon, I'm not a human resource expert so
9 you'll have to bear with me as I get up to speed on
10 some of your terminology.

11 A. Sure.

12 Q. So just to make it really simple, in the
13 total compensation packages I'm kind of assuming
14 there's three things; base pay, benefits, and AIP.
15 In general, those are the company's expenses?

16 A. Well, that would be what we -- I think
17 what you're describing is total rewards, which is a
18 component of what we pay people in compensation,
19 whether base short-term incentives or long-term,
20 but then when you mention benefits, such as, I'm
21 assuming, you mean like health and welfare
22 benefits --

23 Q. Right.

24 A. -- or retirement benefits --

25 Q. Whatever the benefits package.

1 A. -- that's what we call total rewards. So
2 it's a little broader than compensation.

3 Q. Okay. So of your total rewards, what
4 percent is AIP? Of the costs? I'm looking at
5 costs now just in terms of -- so what we're going
6 to have to be recovering. Of your total
7 compensation costs, what percent is AIP? Is it
8 like 3 percent or even if you just compared it to
9 base salary, how much of an incentive bonus can
10 employees get?

11 A. Well, so -- I believe your first question
12 was how much of AIP is part of total rewards?

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. And I don't have that number. That would
15 have to be -- it's really a detailed calculation
16 that we would have to do because different
17 employees are getting opportunity at certain
18 pension levels, versus 401(k), versus that whole
19 array of total rewards, but I think your second
20 question actually focused more on what percentage
21 of AIP is part of our total cash compensation.

22 What I can explain a little further, I
23 think you said how do we know how much people are
24 getting, and we do vary the level of AIP
25 opportunity based upon their job level so certain

1 grades are --

2 Q. What's the range? I understand some might
3 be 2 percent, some might be 10. But I'd like to
4 know what the range of potential AIP benefit would
5 be to an employee?

6 A. So I believe our lowest opportunity level
7 is 6 percent for some individual contributor exempt
8 employees. And as we go up through our grade
9 structure, the people who are part of our standard
10 grade structure, those levels go up, I believe --
11 actually, can I look to something just to
12 double-check?

13 Q. Sure. Absolutely.

14 A. I don't think I have that with me, but I
15 believe the levels would be either at 50 percent or
16 slightly above 50 percent, and those are for our
17 more senior level executive positions.

18 Q. So of their base pay they get 50 percent
19 more of their base pay as a bonus?

20 A. Based on those performance metrics.

21 Q. Yes. Okay. So that helps explain. I was
22 not clear in a line of rebuttal testimony that said
23 the cost greater than 25 percent base pay. So you
24 would only be recovering in here up to 25 percent
25 if an employee, say, Dave over there, had a 50

1 percent bonus that he could have earned, he'd only
2 get 25 percent coverage?

3 A. Yes. And I should add that a high
4 majority of all our eligible employees are at 25
5 percent or lower in those levels, opportunity
6 levels.

7 Q. In planning for this, does the company
8 assume they're going to be paying the full amount?

9 A. I'm sorry. Can you restate that when you
10 say "paying the full amount"?

11 Q. Well, if you've got up to 25 percent
12 increase in compensation to an employee, that's a
13 huge variable. How does the company plan for maybe
14 they don't need it, or do you just assume everybody
15 does?

16 A. Well, I'm in HR, but not an accounting
17 expert, but what we do is in our compensation area,
18 we provide eligibility data to our finance and
19 accounting area and we do assume that target level
20 opportunity is accrued throughout the year, but
21 then they make adjustments in that based upon how
22 the business is trending, and so forth. So, again,
23 that would be not in my area of expertise, but we
24 do accrue for that and plan for that.

25 Q. Okay. And I don't know that I need to

1 know this, but "target level opportunity," what
2 does that mean?

3 A. Target level opportunity means that when
4 we look to these third-party salary surveys and
5 compensation surveys, when we receive information
6 in there that at certain jobs it's -- for example,
7 in a very simple example, if you were working with
8 an employee that was earning \$50,000 annually and
9 if their target opportunity was \$10,000, that
10 target amount is what we're seeing coming out of
11 the survey data. So it's not the actual amount
12 that's paid out that we see in survey data, but
13 it's the target opportunity that one could earn for
14 an annual incentive.

15 Q. Okay. So going back to the percent here,
16 if you've got a range of the compensation costs
17 that goes from 2 percent to 50 percent and we
18 disallowed AIP altogether, that would be a huge,
19 significant amount of money that would not be
20 allowed for cost recovery; right?

21 A. Yes. Well, what I can --

22 Q. It's not just 2 or 3 percent, you're
23 talking this is a big component of your
24 compensation packages, AIP, as a percentage?

25 A. The AIP when we look -- if your question

1 is how do I respond to that, what we look to is
2 these are what we consider competitive pay levels
3 and so we look to total cash compensation and that
4 is a driving factor in how we want to retain our
5 talent and attract new talent. So we consider
6 paying annual incentive as a key factor in how we
7 compensate, so it's not just base salary. It is
8 also incentive opportunity.

9 Q. How long has the company been using AIP?

10 A. I don't have an exact year, but I believe
11 it's been in place for many, many years. So I
12 would have to get back to you, if you need an
13 exact.

14 Q. Well, an approximate, 10 years, 20, that
15 would be good to know.

16 Let's see here. And then how does an
17 employee get an increase in their base salary?

18 A. What we have annually is an opportunity to
19 earn a merit increase. So I had mentioned earlier
20 that our employees have a performance management
21 system in place, our leaders do with their
22 employees, to assess the performance of each
23 employee, and they receive ratings based on that
24 and how they're performing throughout the year.
25 And so a merit opportunity is where we, again,

1 watch what our surveys are saying as a general
2 merit opportunity that would be delivered. We look
3 to those survey sources to set those merit budgets,
4 but annually when we conclude our performance year,
5 which is our fiscal year, we rate people based on
6 how they're performing and then we conduct a merit
7 opportunity cycle and leaders assess how their
8 employees are doing and that's their opportunity to
9 say with discretion how certain employees are
10 performing based on their performance rating and
11 the role that they're in. And so that's their
12 opportunity to make a change to their employee's
13 base salary.

14 Q. And that's an annual opportunity as well?

15 A. We have been conducting that annually for
16 our non-bargaining employees.

17 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Okay. I think
18 that concludes my questions. Thank you.

19 THE WITNESS: You're welcome.

20 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you, Commissioner
21 Fedorchak. Commissioner Kalk.

22 COMMISSIONER KALK: Thank you, Your Honor.

23 **EXAMINATION**

24 **BY COMMISSIONER KALK:**

25 Q. Thank you, Sharon. This is a lot of fun;

1 right?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. How long have you been with the company,
4 you said?

5 A. It will be six months, I think, next week.

6 Q. What an opportunity; right? No, I
7 appreciate your answer to all the questions. Just
8 a couple to clarify.

9 When you've been making comments about
10 employees, are you talking about employees that
11 work for NSP, doing business as Xcel Energy
12 exclusively, or are you talking about employees for
13 that company, as well as employees who work for
14 Xcel Energy, Inc.?

15 A. Well, our compensation programs are really
16 done and organized centrally so that we have the
17 same compensation philosophy and structure.

18 Q. So your comments are dealing with not only
19 the regulated company, as well as the
20 privately-held company, if you will?

21 A. Well, all of our -- I would quantify that
22 as these are compensation programs that apply to
23 all of our non-bargaining employees, so if your
24 specific question is related to the Op Co. versus
25 the service company.

1 Q. We don't regulate Xcel Energy, Inc., so
2 are you talking about some of the employee
3 compensation that work for that company?

4 A. The compensation programs that I described
5 here today do apply to all of our non-bargaining
6 employees.

7 Q. So does that mean yes?

8 A. Yes, I guess that would include the
9 services company.

10 Q. I'm trying to -- this is always a point of
11 contention whenever we get to salary, because you
12 have MDU Resources, MDU Utilities, Ottertail
13 Corporation, Ottertail Utilities, and it's very
14 confusing for many Commissioners and others to
15 understand the rate pay structure, because what
16 somebody working for Xcel Energy, Inc., gets paid,
17 that's their own business, it's coming out of their
18 own investor dollars. But it is our business when
19 you get into what people are getting paid that get
20 part of their salaries out of the regulated part of
21 it.

22 So what I'm trying to get a feel for is,
23 take someone like Laura, who testified this
24 morning, did a great job in her testimony, is her
25 salary all dedicated to the regulated portion of

1 the company or does some of her salary come from
2 the non-regulated portion of the company?

3 A. You know, I'm probably not the best person
4 to answer that, because I don't know how we break
5 out which employees are assigned to which operating
6 company. Again, when I work on our compensation
7 programs, they apply to all of those business
8 lines.

9 Q. I think that's a big point of
10 clarification, because if we're going to take
11 investor-owned dollars potentially and provide it
12 for a compensation plan for someone that is not
13 even in the regulated employee pool, that's not a
14 good setup, whether we've done it or not in the
15 past. So that's also -- maybe we'll ask that
16 question to our attorney on the break, but that's a
17 big point, so I don't know how we would tie that
18 up.

19 I mean, do you understand the question I'm
20 asking?

21 A. Yes, I do.

22 Q. Maybe I'm not asking --

23 COMMISSIONER KALK: I'll ask your
24 attorney. Are you tracking what I'm driving at
25 here?

1 MS. VALLEY: Thank you, Commissioner Kalk.
2 We do, and we think that there's another witness,
3 Anne Heuer, that would be able to address that.

4 COMMISSIONER KALK: All right. Then I'll
5 let that go then. Okay. Thank you.

6 Q. (COMMISSIONER KALK CONTINUING) I was
7 looking at the Web site while you were talking.
8 You show a vacancy of 85 employees for the company
9 all over the country. It seems like that's not
10 very many employees that you're short right now
11 considering the size of your company.

12 So do you really have a shortage of hiring
13 employees when you just have that small number of
14 vacancies for such a large company?

15 A. You know, I'm not as in touch with what
16 our staffing group is working on with talent
17 acquisition opportunities, so I don't know whether
18 what the Web site is showing reflects all open
19 positions so I would not be the best person to ask
20 about whether that's reflective of every open
21 position we have.

22 Q. So what can you point to maybe in the
23 record if you're trying to connect the dots that
24 you need this plan to recruit and retrain good
25 people that shows that you maybe have had

1 challenges hiring people?

2 A. Well, I think the focus of my rebuttal
3 testimony focused a lot on some of the complexities
4 and challenges that we've had in the nuclear space,
5 and I know that there are a number of open
6 positions in there and I think there's a number
7 quoted in that document as well, but I know some of
8 the stories or the anecdotal kind of responses that
9 we've had from our talent acquisition, our
10 recruiting group, talk about the challenges of
11 really trying to get new talent in the door in
12 those critical areas like nuclear.

13 Q. Okay. So I think for me, just speaking
14 for myself, just through what I picked up today and
15 read before, that I view the employees dealing with
16 the nuclear energy side of it as their own
17 category. When I talked about that before, I'm
18 looking at more people not in that field, if you
19 will.

20 The last question. You made the comment
21 to our attorney about, you know, the companies
22 you're talking about, other companies do this all
23 the time. Are you referring to other companies
24 that are investor-owned utilities, or are you
25 referring to other companies like Coke and Pepsi

1 that have the same type incentive plans?

2 A. So I think you're referring to when I made
3 the statement that other companies that use market-
4 based compensation approach, if that's correct?

5 Q. Yes.

6 A. Okay. So when I made that reference, I
7 was referring to, I think, specifically the third-
8 party surveys that we look to. So I can expend a
9 little bit further on that comment.

10 And it doesn't have to be specific to
11 utility company experience, but if you are an
12 organization that practices market-based
13 compensation philosophy, you are looking to see
14 what other similarly-situated companies are out
15 there. Like in our case we are looking to survey
16 specific to utility company or investor-owned
17 utilities --

18 Q. So you are comparing yourself to --

19 A. -- so we do that, yes.

20 Q. -- investor-owned somewhere else in the
21 country?

22 A. Yes. We actually look to surveys that are
23 specific to utility benchmarking and companies that
24 are our size, but when I made that statement
25 earlier, it can be in general industry practices,

1 too, that companies that look to market-based
2 approaches, they look to quantifiable data like
3 third-party surveys to benchmark themselves about
4 how they're paying. So that was the reference I
5 made.

6 COMMISSIONER KALK: Okay. Thank you very
7 much.

8 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

9 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you, Commissioner
10 Kalk.

11 Commissioner Christmann.

12 **EXAMINATION**

13 **BY COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN:**

14 Q. Ms. Koenig, are you the expert on the
15 pension fund issues that Ms. McCarten discussed
16 earlier about, you know, involving the possibility
17 of smoothing the needs over a longer period of
18 time?

19 A. Actually, I'm not. My area of focus is
20 compensation, so I wouldn't be able to address
21 those pension questions.

22 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Okay. Then I
23 have no more questions, Judge Fetch.

24 JUDGE FETCH: All right. Thank you.

25 Ms. Valley, do you have any redirect?

1 MS. VALLEY: No, Your Honor.

2 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. Mr. Norrell?

3 MR. NORRELL: Yes, Your Honor.

4 **RECROSS-EXAMINATION**

5 **BY MR. NORRELL:**

6 Q. Ms. Koenig, you had stated -- when
7 Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco had mentioned you said that the
8 API is tied to corporate performance, and you
9 mentioned how there was the earnings per share
10 requirement and everything.

11 Doesn't this, in fact, benefit the
12 shareholders of NSP as opposed to the ratepayers?

13 A. So if you were referring to the EPS
14 funding factor that I mentioned?

15 Q. (Nods.)

16 A. I think that it actually does benefit our
17 customers as well as shareholders, but more
18 importantly, what that does is it shows that we are
19 looking at our financial performance and we're
20 prudently looking at whether we have the available
21 funding to pay out an annual incentive. So while
22 our annual incentive program has operating metrics
23 that very directly speak to reliability and safety
24 and other important areas of the scorecards that
25 directly benefit our customers, what it also does

1 is, it makes sure that as a publicly-owned company,
2 we're also looking to that EPS factor to make sure
3 that we have the affordability to pay it. We
4 wouldn't want to be in a position where we're
5 paying out an incentive when we're really not
6 achieving those earnings outcomes that we're
7 striving for.

8 Q. Well, then that still protects the
9 shareholder, doesn't it, because they're insulated
10 against a loss?

11 A. Well, I would say that it protects both,
12 the customers as well. If we're paying out on an
13 annual incentive program, for example, that really
14 we could put those funds towards other investments
15 that we're making in capital, for example, so we
16 are paying out on an annual incentive plan when we
17 achieve target results or something in our
18 threshold target or up to above target opportunity.
19 So we pay out when there's performance and it is
20 variable pay.

21 Q. So if an employee meets all of their
22 performance metrics, I think was the term you used,
23 but the company doesn't meet their earnings per
24 share requirement, how would that employee be
25 compensated?

1 A. Well, because of that affordability
2 trigger and if that did not get met for that annual
3 incentive program year, the employee or other
4 employees like them would not receive a payout. So
5 because it is variable in nature, they would not be
6 getting an annual incentive payout that year
7 because the company did not perform on all of their
8 metrics that were required.

9 Q. So even though that employee may have
10 exceeded their performance, they'd still be -- use
11 the term "baseline employee," they'd still be
12 treated like a baseline employee, even though their
13 performance was above that baseline?

14 A. I don't recall the term "baseline
15 employee," but I think I understand what you're
16 saying, but I can offer up a different way that
17 that employee would be recognized for their
18 contribution. So while in that event if that
19 funding factor was not met and we were not able to
20 pay out an annual incentive program payout that
21 year, another way an employee could be recognized
22 for their individual contribution is actually in
23 the merit cycle opportunity, which I described
24 further for the Commissioners here, that that is an
25 opportunity to recognize an individual's

1 performance and assess whether they should receive
2 an increase in their base salary.

3 Q. And just a question clarifying the merit
4 opportunity. Is that contingent upon the
5 supervisor bringing that to the company, or is that
6 mainly on the employee? Who presents that? Maybe
7 my question is not clear.

8 A. So I think your question is, how does that
9 occur annually? Is it employee driven or leader
10 driven, or is it -- I think you're saying is it a
11 cycle that we go through that?

12 Q. Correct.

13 A. It is not an employee directive or driven
14 initiative. What we do as an HR organization is
15 that we offer that opportunity to recognize
16 individual employees for their performance
17 throughout the year, and we do that in what's
18 called an annual merit cycle. So it is a process
19 that we go through and we assess what our budget is
20 for that and we hold leaders accountable to what
21 those budgets are and how much is an affordable
22 amount that we can put towards a merit increase
23 that would affect their base salary. So it is
24 coordinated by HR. The leaders work with that
25 opportunity and then they participate in that event

1 with their employee.

2 MR. NORRELL: Okay. Thank you. No
3 further questions, Your Honor.

4 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you.

5 Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco, any further questions?

6 **FURTHER EXAMINATION**

7 **BY MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO:**

8 Q. I'm not sure if you're the right person to
9 ask. I did wonder if the nuclear issue, attracting
10 and retaining nuclear employees, if the cost of
11 that incentive program was disproportionately high
12 compared to the general -- the rest of the company,
13 if -- you know, if you had to invest more in the
14 incentive program for nuclear than the relative
15 amount for everybody else? Can you answer that or
16 is that the witness that's coming to answer that?

17 A. Well, I would say that the details of what
18 those costs are and the dollars of the recovery
19 that we're requesting associated with this case
20 would be more for Ms. Heuer.

21 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: Okay. Thank you.
22 That's all.

23 JUDGE FETCH: Commissioners, any further
24 questions? Commissioner Fedorchak.

25

FURTHER EXAMINATION

BY COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK:

Q. Two more that I should have asked before, but missed them.

A. Mm-hmm.

Q. In your testimony that you've read today, you say, "...we propose to cap our recovery of these costs at 25 percent of base pay. This cap essentially precludes rate recovery of the costs of providing incentive compensation to executive-level employees."

Why does that preclude the executive-level employees?

A. Well, what is meant by that is that any leadership or management or even executive level that has the opportunity for their AIP at a percentage above 25 percent, for example, 30 percent in this case, 5 percent of that would not be part of our request for rate recovery. So what we are trying to do is to say that we're not asking for recovery on 100 percent of our costs. We're asking for what we see as a reasonable amount that would reflect 25 percent of base pay.

Q. "...precludes rate recovery of the costs of providing compensation to executive-level

1 employees." To me that means that the executive
2 team, their AIP isn't included in this, would not
3 be included in this, and what you just said leads
4 me to believe that 25 percent of it would be. So
5 if their's was 50 percent, say 50 percent of --
6 their API was 50 percent, then 25 percent would be?

7 A. The example I just gave was to kind of
8 illustrate about the difference of someone at a 30
9 percent target, but the exact numbers of how that
10 is calculated might be best answered by Ms. Heuer.

11 Q. All right. And then maybe she's the one
12 to address why the company is going from 15 percent
13 to 25 percent. Previously you had recovery of 15
14 percent of AIP costs and now you're asking for 25
15 percent. I'm curious why.

16 A. Well, we believe that that is a reasonable
17 cost of doing business because we look to what is
18 market competitive and the median pay practices for
19 total cash compensation, and we feel that that is a
20 reasonable cost. But, again, as I mentioned
21 earlier, I don't know the history of that
22 background.

23 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Okay. Thank you,
24 Sharon.

25 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

1 JUDGE FETCH: Any other questions from
2 Commissioners? Okay. Any further questions?

3 MS. VALLEY: No, Your Honor.

4 JUDGE FETCH: Mr. Norrell, anything
5 further?

6 MR. NORRELL: No, Your Honor.

7 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: No. Thank you.

8 JUDGE FETCH: All right. Thank you.

9 Ms. Koenig, you are excused.

10 All right. Ms. Gingery, do you need a
11 few-minutes break? All right. We are going to
12 just take a 10-minute break. Be back -- we are
13 going to reconvene at about two minutes after four.

14 (Recess was taken.)

15 JUDGE FETCH: All right. We are back on
16 the record. It is 4:02 p.m., Central Time. And at
17 this time I believe Ms. Valley is going to step
18 back and let Richard Johnson handle the questioning
19 at this point.

20 MR. JOHNSON: That is correct, Your Honor.
21 Thank you.

22 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you.

23 MR. JOHNSON: The company would call Lisa
24 Perkett as its next witness.

25 JUDGE FETCH: I appreciate that. Thank

1 you.

2 And, Ms. Paulson, do you have the witness
3 statement?

4 MS. PAULSON: I do.

5 JUDGE FETCH: Please pass those out.

6 And, Mr. Johnson, did you want to instruct
7 something about that?

8 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, Your Honor.

9 Ms. Perkett's statement takes a little bit
10 more than five minutes to read, and consistent with
11 the protocol we've adopted, Ms. Perkett is not
12 going to read the entire statement. She's going to
13 try to read the gist of the statement. So if
14 you're attempting to follow along off the written
15 document, you may miss a paragraph or two or she
16 may skip over a paragraph or two. It may make it a
17 little easier to listen.

18 JUDGE FETCH: That's very good. And this
19 is marked NSP Exhibit 27, and I believe we did
20 stipulate that all of those would be admitted, so
21 that document is admitted into the record.

22 And, Ms. Perkett, were you here earlier
23 when I instructed as to penalties for perjury?

24 THE WITNESS: No, I was not. And we were
25 not quite up and running downstairs so we missed

1 the beginning.

2 JUDGE FETCH: All right. All witness
3 testimony at this hearing is taken under oath and
4 is subject to penalties for perjury. By law I am
5 required to inform you that perjury is a material
6 misstatement of fact. In North Dakota it is a
7 Class C felony, which is punishable by a maximum
8 fine of \$5,000, maximum five years in prison, or
9 both.

10 Please raise your right hand.

11 Do you solemnly swear the testimony you're
12 about to give shall be the truth under the pains
13 and penalties of perjury?

14 THE WITNESS: I do.

15 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. And speak up
16 nice and loudly.

17 THE WITNESS: Okay.

18 JUDGE FETCH: Mr. Johnson.

19 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Your Honor.

20 **LISA PERKETT,**

21 being first duly sworn, was examined and testified
22 as follows:

23 **DIRECT EXAMINATION**

24 **BY MR. JOHNSON:**

25 Q. Ms. Perkett, your direct and rebuttal

1 testimony has been marked and admitted as Exhibits
2 11 and 12. It's my understanding there are no
3 corrections to that.

4 A. That is correct.

5 Q. Would you like to read your opening
6 statement at this time?

7 A. I would.

8 Q. Thank you.

9 A. I am the director of capital asset
10 accounting for Xcel Energy Services. I have over
11 32 years of experience in utility accounting.

12 In my direct testimony, I discuss two
13 topics. First, I sponsor our North Dakota specific
14 depreciation study. While Mr. Majoros questions
15 the results of the removal cost included in our
16 depreciation study, Mr. Majoros has not identified
17 any facts relied upon in the depreciation study
18 that are incorrect, and the advisory staff proposed
19 adjustments to the revenue requirement are
20 inconsistent with longstanding regulatory and
21 accounting practice. If adopted, Mr. Majoros'
22 recommendations would cause future ratepayers to
23 pay the removal cost of assets after retirement
24 when the assets would no longer be providing any
25 benefits. Depreciation is expressly designed to

1 recover the investment and net removal costs over
2 the lives of the assets so that the customers who
3 benefit from the asset pay those costs.

4 I'll skip the next paragraph.

5 My rebuttal testimony responds to
6 Mr. Majoros' recommendations concerning
7 depreciation expense. Mr. Majoros lists three
8 recommendations on page 3 of his testimony.

9 First, he recommends that the company
10 refund the difference between the actual
11 depreciation reserve and the theoretical
12 depreciation reserve for our transmission,
13 distribution, and general assets. There is on a
14 total company basis a surplus of \$176.6 million.
15 In my direct testimony I explain how the surplus
16 has been generated, essentially as a result of
17 increased service lives and changes in the cost of
18 removal. I also explain our proposal to use the
19 surplus to lower depreciation rates over the
20 remaining lives of the assets. This proposal is
21 consistent with the use of the straight line
22 depreciation. This proposal results in an
23 approximately \$4.2 million annual reduction in
24 depreciation expense at the total company level.

25 Mr. Majoros' other two recommendations on

1 page 3 of his direct would limit recovery of
2 removal cost to those items that qualify as legal
3 AROs. And ARO stands for asset retirement
4 obligation. My rebuttal testimony explains that
5 the distinction between legal AROs and nonlegal
6 AROs is based on financial reporting requirements
7 and is not based on operating, accounting, or
8 regulatory requirements. In my rebuttal testimony
9 at page 13, I presented a table that lists all the
10 types of legal AROs that apply to the company. I
11 will not read the list in the document.

12 There are many expected removal activities
13 and components that are not legal AROs, including
14 buildings, transmission lines and poles,
15 distribution lines and poles, which are only
16 examples of a few major categories of assets that
17 are not legal AROs and which cannot be retired in
18 place.

19 For example, there is no legal ARO to
20 remove retired distribution lines and poles or
21 retired transmission lines and poles, but we could
22 not abandon those dead poles and wires in place.
23 Since we need to remove those poles and wires, we
24 should recover the costs and those costs should be
25 recovered from the customers who benefit from the

1 use of those assets to provide electric service.

2 Mr. Majoros -- excuse me. Mr. Majoros'
3 assertion that there is no requirement to remove
4 nonlegal AROs is not true. In Case No. PU-07-776,
5 we expressly agreed to the creation of a regulatory
6 liability. More specifically, the Commission-
7 approved settlement states: "Both parties agree
8 that, unless directed otherwise by the Commission,
9 rate recovery, past, present, and future, for the
10 removal and retirement of company utility property
11 will be used solely for the retirement of the
12 company's utility property and recognized as a
13 regulatory liability."

14 Mr. Majoros states that we have not
15 reported the accumulated nonlegal ARO in our
16 financial statements, in FERC Form 1, or in our
17 North Dakota annual earnings reports. We have
18 reported the financial information we are required
19 to report by the SEC, the FERC, and the Commission.
20 I will skip the rest of the paragraph.

21 Finally, Mr. Majoros asserts that the
22 company uses an inappropriate methodology for
23 determining removal costs. The company uses its
24 historical removal costs to determine the current
25 cost of removal. Prior to his supplemental direct,

1 Mr. Majoros argued that we should use a five-year
2 historical average to determine the cost of
3 removal. He has abandoned that approach because,
4 as I had indicated in my rebuttal testimony, using
5 a five- year average would increase the cost of
6 removal. In an effort to respond to our specific
7 removal cost study, he makes broad general
8 arguments based on mistaken assumptions without
9 identifying any facts relied upon in the
10 depreciation study that are incorrect.

11 That is the conclusion of my statement.

12 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you.

13 MR. JOHNSON: Your Honor, Ms. Perkett is
14 now available for cross-examination.

15 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you, Mr. Johnson.

16 Mr. Norrell.

17 MR. NORRELL: Thank you, Judge.

18 **CROSS-EXAMINATION**

19 **BY MR. NORRELL:**

20 Q. Ms. Perkett, I'd like to ask you to refer
21 to page 15 of your direct testimony, specifically
22 Table 4.

23 A. I am there.

24 Q. Okay. There do you show that your overall
25 depreciation study decreases depreciation expense

1 on a total company basis?

2 A. Yes, it does, by \$6.7 million, \$6.8 if you
3 round up.

4 Q. But it increases the North Dakota
5 jurisdictional expense; is that correct?

6 A. That is correct. And the reason is that
7 the distribution line was not allocated. That is
8 100 percent North Dakota assets so that carries
9 forth in its entirety. The rest of the numbers,
10 electric transmission, electric general, software,
11 common general and common software all need to be
12 allocated -- those are total systems costs -- to
13 the North Dakota jurisdiction and their effect. By
14 allocating it, it decreases the decrease and in
15 total it then becomes an increase, because electric
16 distribution is an increase.

17 Q. Okay. On your direct testimony, Schedule
18 7, page 4 of 48, could you please turn to that?

19 JUDGE FETCH: Did you say page 4?

20 MR. NORRELL: Yes, page 4 of 88. I
21 apologize.

22 Q. (MR. NORRELL CONTINUING) There you refer
23 to a study, do you not, that recommended an overall
24 decrease of approximately \$7.9 million in the
25 annual depreciation expense for electric facilities

1 here in North Dakota?

2 A. Yes. The Table 4 we talked about was just
3 the transmission, distribution, and general, and
4 then the electric and common for those. There is
5 production changes as well.

6 Q. Okay. But overall, instead of reducing
7 the depreciation expense, you're actually
8 increasing it in North Dakota?

9 A. As it is allocated to its pieces, yes,
10 because the distribution piece that we have shown
11 in the North Dakota study is 100 percent of
12 distribution assets in the State of North Dakota.
13 There are no Minnesota or South Dakota distribution
14 assets in that study. And so when you allocate a
15 system cost like transmission, which is the entire
16 transmission system, you pick up between 5 and 6
17 percent for North Dakota. So you get 5 to 6
18 percent of the depreciation change, but because in
19 this study 100 percent of the assets within the
20 State of North Dakota for distribution, you got 100
21 percent of the change for distribution and so when
22 you jurisdictionalize it, it moves the numbers
23 around. And this study was done at total company
24 level, except for distribution.

25 Q. Except for distribution. Okay.

1 On page 2 of that same schedule, about the
2 middle part of that page, it states that you have
3 lengthened several lives in the transmission and
4 distribution functions; is that correct?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Now, as you lengthen a life, doesn't
7 that -- doesn't straight line depreciation rate go
8 down as a result of that?

9 A. As a result of just that change, yes. If
10 the removal net salvage rate increased, it would
11 take it the other way, so it's how those two play
12 off against each other. On top of that we've
13 worked into this change the average remaining life
14 method so that we can amortize the surplus over the
15 average remaining life of all the individual
16 assets.

17 Q. In that same paragraph, you mentioned that
18 there is a trend toward higher negative net
19 salvage; is that correct?

20 A. That is correct.

21 Q. Based on my very elementary understanding
22 of this, net salvage is the result of salvage minus
23 the cost of removal; is that correct?

24 A. That is correct. That is the basic
25 equation.

1 Q. Okay. So then does that mean that the
2 higher negative net salvage, in fact, means higher
3 future costs of removal?

4 A. That means that over a long period of
5 trends, and our trends for many accounts go back
6 over 60 years, that we are seeing an increase in
7 overall net salvage. It could be a factor of
8 removal stays the same and salvage is decreasing,
9 or it could be that salvage is decreasing and
10 removal is increasing. And that's -- it makes
11 sense in the fact that there are environmental
12 rules and disposing of the asset once you remove it
13 from the field have been increasing over time.
14 What you could do maybe in the 1950s with some of
15 these poles, you can't do today, so that adds cost
16 to remove those poles permanently at the end of
17 their life.

18 Q. So it would be regulations that have
19 driven that. Could you give an example?

20 A. Some of the regulations, they're either
21 the state ones or the federal ones. They can be
22 even as small as a local area will have some
23 requirements on dealing with, you know, the waste,
24 if you will. I can get specific ones. I don't
25 have them all listed. We do track them all and

1 talk with environmental quite often on removal.

2 Q. Okay. Would you agree that most of the
3 increase to the North Dakota distribution plant
4 depreciation expense is driven by higher future
5 cost of removal estimates?

6 A. For the distribution portion?

7 Q. Yeah.

8 A. Without going into one line item after
9 another, yes. It's been offset. There's higher
10 removal and there's longer lives, but the removal
11 has outpaced, if you will, causing the depreciation
12 to go up.

13 Q. Are there any ways to reverse that trend,
14 decrease that?

15 A. Well, you know, you have to be
16 environmentally responsible. You know, we need to
17 dispose of the product and we need to take the
18 product back out of the field. We need to make
19 sure our workers are safe. We need to transport
20 the product to where it is processed. Sometimes
21 you can't just take it to a landfill or a garbage
22 depot. You might have to break the product down.
23 For instance, you might have to drain the oils out
24 of some of the products. Even as simple as mineral
25 oil would need to be drained before the remaining

1 asset is dealt with.

2 Sometimes we do break the asset down to
3 see if we can get some scrap value out of it, so
4 you'd want to do that as well. So we try to keep
5 it as low as possible, but, again, you want to be
6 environmentally safe. And in some instances you
7 just can't leave it where it's at. For instance, a
8 neighborhood that has poles down in their backyard,
9 you want to replace that line. I think we
10 discussed replacing a line, poles and conductor.
11 You certainly don't want to leave those poles and
12 conductor where they are, just drop them on the
13 ground, because you want to keep your removal at
14 zero. You certainly would want to take it out and
15 put the new stuff in and deal with it.

16 Q. Is this an example of where a very
17 restrictive area or jurisdiction could really drive
18 the cost up of removal?

19 A. I'm not exactly sure. Do you mean like
20 could state rules cause the removal --

21 Q. State, county, local.

22 A. They could. Yes, they could be an
23 influence, and we do look at the individual areas
24 as well as the -- you know, EPA and others that
25 have requirements. We look at the DOT, too, that

1 has transportation requirements. Depending on how
2 hazardous it is, what do you have to do to protect
3 it on the rail lines and the truck lines and such
4 like that.

5 So it really varies. Some of it might be
6 dealing with, you know, groundwater, you know, so
7 that it doesn't come out of the asset and go into
8 the ground as well, so protect like the oils, and
9 such.

10 Q. Is there -- and I don't want to accuse the
11 company of anything untoward, but is there any
12 effort to kind of shop around, for lack of a better
13 term, for the cheapest way of disposing and
14 removing some of these things?

15 A. Absolutely. I mean, they do look for the
16 absolute -- you know, what they can do at the
17 lowest cost. And we also have a group that's
18 actually dedicated to trying to get the best scrap
19 value out of a lot of the assets. And sometimes
20 there are companies that will just take the asset
21 from the field once we disconnect it, and assuming
22 like here on copper wire and such, they would want
23 to extract it. So we do look for those
24 opportunities as well.

25 Q. Okay. Could you give just a baseline

1 example of -- or definition, from your perspective,
2 of what a legal ARO is, as you used the term?

3 A. Sure. Legal AROs is a term that was
4 created when the FASB, the Financial Accounting
5 Standards Board, decided to standardize everybody
6 in the industry, not just us, but, you know, the
7 grocery stores and the gas stations and all
8 reporting of removal costs. They wanted a standard
9 reporting of removal costs. And they based it on
10 what is written in the legal statutory rules so
11 everybody would have a common ground.

12 So the rules around asbestos, that was one
13 of their areas that they focused at. The rules
14 around asbestos are clear, so if Xcel has or NSP
15 has asbestos in any of its plants, you know, that
16 became a legal ARO. If K-Mart has asbestos in one
17 of their buildings, they would have a very similar
18 obligation as well, because they'd have to follow
19 that rule. So it was a standard and it was a
20 minimum amount of presentation of what could be out
21 there, but it didn't intend to cover all the
22 business removal. There's business reasons to do
23 removal, and I discussed one of them with the poles
24 down in the backyard. So there's business removal
25 that goes beyond the legal AROs.

1 Just to carry it forward, as the legal
2 AROs were defined by the FASB and we were obviously
3 required to report, everything that was not
4 accounted for that was a business reason to remove
5 under the legal became the nonlegal portion. But
6 in reality, we actually look at it a little
7 different at a regulated entity. A nonlegal is the
8 regulatory removal method, how the Commissions have
9 directed us to do removal recovery through the
10 depreciate rate in its entirety so we can always
11 have that number. It wouldn't get blended or
12 melded into this legal ARO for financial reporting
13 purposes. So asbestos is actually in legal and
14 it's in nonlegal AROs for NSP, because it's being
15 covered on the depreciation rates and its being
16 represented for financial. We do balance that out
17 for financial purposes. We do balance those two
18 out for reporting to the SEC, but we wanted to make
19 sure whatever was authorized and approved under
20 depreciation rates was kept clean and separate from
21 any financial reporting we are required to do. May
22 I ask, I had a water here: Before I start
23 coughing. I appreciate it. Thank you.

24 Q. The line in Schedule 7 on page 2 where you
25 discuss the higher negative net salvage, the trend

1 towards higher negative net value, is that just
2 legal AROs or nonlegal, or both?

3 A. In this removal study, it's all the
4 nonlegal AROs. This is all the analysis that's
5 done on many years of history for a total business-
6 related removal that we have been including in
7 depreciation rates, so it's the nonlegal.

8 Q. Does the company report its liability for
9 nonlegal AROs to shareholders or to the SEC or
10 anyone like that?

11 A. Yes, we do. It is very clear in there.
12 It is actually reported for total Xcel and it's
13 actually reported for each of the operating
14 companies.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. And just to be clear, the legal ARO --
17 nonlegal ARO reg liability is actually a component
18 of accumulated depreciation when we do ratemaking.
19 It offsets or reduces rate base because it has been
20 collected through the depreciation rate and it's a
21 proper reduction to rate base.

22 MR. NORRELL: Your Honor, I'd like
23 permission to approach the witness.

24 JUDGE FETCH: Yes. Thank you.

25 MR. NORRELL: Your Honor, what I have

1 handed out is a North Dakota Public Service
2 Commission data request from -- this is the
3 response from the Company.

4 JUDGE FETCH: Okay. What is the -- my
5 copy says ND PCS 8-068.

6 MR. NORRELL: Yes, that would be correct.

7 JUDGE FETCH: But this would actually
8 become Exhibit 10.

9 MR. NORRELL: Eleven by my count.

10 JUDGE FETCH: I'm sorry. 11. I'm looking
11 at 10.

12 Mr. Johnson, do you have a copy of the
13 proposed exhibit?

14 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, we do, Your Honor.

15 JUDGE FETCH: Any objection?

16 MR. JOHNSON: No, Your Honor.

17 JUDGE FETCH: All right. Thank you. This
18 is PSC Exhibit 11, and it is admitted.

19 MR. NORRELL: Thank you, Your Honor.

20 JUDGE FETCH: Proceed.

21 Q. (MR. NORRELL CONTINUING) Are you familiar
22 with this document?

23 A. Yes, I am.

24 Q. Could you describe briefly what it is?

25 A. Just briefly, it's walking through the

1 legal ARO process.

2 Q. Did staff ask you to provide the work
3 papers and calculation of the obligation as of
4 December 31st, 2010 and also the same date in 2011?

5 A. That was the question, yes.

6 Q. Does that relate to the legal or nonlegal
7 AROs?

8 A. The asset retirement obligation is the
9 legal AROs. The legal AROs are the minimum amount
10 to be reported under FASB to the SEC reporting. It
11 is not the amount that's used in ratemaking. It's
12 not the amount that's being recovered through
13 depreciation rates. I'd be happy to walk through
14 the math showing how to do that.

15 Q. Sure.

16 A. But, again -- would you like to hear it?
17 Sure. Again, it's the method that we use for
18 financial reporting, which is important, because we
19 do trade. Basically, it's a method, like I said, a
20 minimum that every company that is trading on the
21 Stock Exchange must report. It is an estimate at a
22 point in time of removal. And let's just use the
23 asbestos. So we're going to estimate asbestos
24 today and we have an obligation on a building with
25 it. We must take that obligation way out into the

1 future when we think we will settle that
2 obligation, in other words, remove the asbestos,
3 and then we most present value it back to when the
4 obligation occurred.

5 Now, if you've followed asbestos, asbestos
6 has not been used in business since 1984, so it
7 might be an asset that went in in 1970. Okay. So
8 we bring it all the back to 1970 and put the
9 obligation on. And then from that point, you
10 have -- and let's just use dollars because it makes
11 it easier. Let's say it was \$100 at that point.
12 We would have an asset retirement obligation or
13 liability at the time we would recognize an asset
14 requirement cost or an ARC. So we put a plant
15 piece on and a liability piece on. Now, over time,
16 let's just assume that the future value is \$150.
17 Keep it very simple. Over time that \$100 in 1970
18 is going to accrete or accrue interest to go from
19 \$100 to \$150, so we would recognize for FASB \$50 in
20 interest expense over the debt time period. At the
21 same time the asset retirement cost will depreciate
22 over that period of time and it will depreciate
23 \$100. Okay. So choose a 10-year period and assume
24 the accretion is level because it's easy, we can do
25 it in our heads, you would have, you know, annual

1 expense of \$10 of depreciation, \$5 of interest,
2 you'd have \$15 to the income statement in a given
3 year.

4 Just to contrast with our removal that did
5 a historical method, it's looking at what we expect
6 to spend, assuming that it's the same \$150 for
7 asbestos, we would depreciate over that 10-year
8 period, \$15. So your income statement is seeing
9 \$15 through depreciation under the regulatory
10 method, it's seeing \$15 in depreciation and
11 interest through the FASB. So it's kind of moving
12 through time getting the same point, but at the end
13 of the day, the regulatory method is the one that's
14 used in depreciation ratemaking.

15 Q. Thank you.

16 A. You're welcome.

17 Q. At the bottom of this question, the first
18 paragraph, staff also requests the papers
19 supporting the regulatory liability of \$463 million
20 and \$439 million; is that correct?

21 A. That is correct.

22 Q. Now, do these -- does that number refer to
23 the legal or nonlegal AROs?

24 A. The regulatory liability is the nonlegal
25 ARO, the one that has been accumulated in

1 depreciation rates over time. So it's at a point
2 in time how much has been run through depreciation
3 expense up to that point in time. So if it was
4 2011, how much is accumulated in depreciation for
5 removal over time and then if it's the next year,
6 it's one more year's.

7 Q. Could you please read aloud the first
8 sentence of your response for the record?

9 A. "The company respectfully objects to this
10 request as not reasonably calculated to lead to the
11 discovery of relevant evidence because the
12 requested information is irrelevant to determine
13 the North Dakota depreciation expense included in
14 the test year revenue requirement. Asset
15 retirement obligations relate to the required
16 financial presentation necessary for every public
17 trading entity."

18 Q. Thank you. Could you, please, then read
19 the last sentence of your response, which begins
20 with "Subject to this obligation."

21 A. Oh, in that paragraph?

22 Q. Yes. Yes.

23 A. "Subject to this objection and discussion,
24 the Company notes that the amounts related to the
25 regulatory liabilities are based on regulatory

1 orders and/or approved rates, and the detail
2 underlying these amounts can be seen on page 82 of
3 our 2011 SEC report 10-K."

4 Q. You mentioned the regulatory orders and/or
5 approved rates. Does that mean that the North
6 Dakota PSC has specifically addressed these
7 liabilities for nonlegal AROs and regulatory orders
8 or rates?

9 A. They don't have a separate docket for
10 depreciation, so they've dealt with it in the rate
11 cases, and they've either dealt with it through
12 specific rates or setting a depreciation expense
13 based on depreciation rates.

14 Q. Okay. So it has been dealt with in
15 prior --

16 A. It is. And just for the record, there is
17 a separate reserve -- we maintain a separate
18 reserve accumulated depreciation based on North
19 Dakota rates, another one for Minnesota based on
20 Minnesota, rates, and another one for South Dakota
21 based on South Dakota rates, because for a single
22 asset there may be three different depreciation
23 rates set, three different Commissions controlling
24 that asset. And in order to make sure when we
25 report North Dakota, we've used North Dakota rates,

1 we maintain in our system all three of those and
2 then also a financial set of books.

3 So when we come and report to you and to
4 your rate base, we're using your approved rates.

5 MR. NORRELL: I think I have no further
6 questions, Your Honor.

7 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you, Mr. Norrell.

8 Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco, any questions?

9 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: I don't believe we
10 have any. Thank you.

11 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. We'll turn to
12 the Commission at this time.

13 Commissioner Fedorchak.

14 **EXAMINATION**

15 **BY COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK:**

16 Q. Ms. Perkett, help educate me a little bit
17 on some of these terms. If I'm looking at the
18 legal AROs, it looks to me like most of those
19 things listed are hazardous. Is that an
20 appropriate way to look at them?

21 A. That's a fairly good way to look at it,
22 because most of your statutes, your rules, your
23 regulations, will deal with the hazardous ones.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. So I'd say it probably isn't something to

1 deal with, you know, the paper waste or any of the
2 nonhazardous standard take it to the standard
3 landfill-type waste. That is still an appropriate
4 cost if you have to pay for that, it's just not
5 necessarily dealt with in a regulation.

6 Q. Mm-hmm. And the term "legal" relates to
7 the fact that there's a legal requirement to remove
8 them?

9 A. Correct. And we do have our legal
10 department go through all of our contracts and our
11 statutes and the rules for every state we're in.
12 So even a contract could set it. For instance, the
13 wind farms are usually on leased land and if you
14 choose to read a contract, it does state once we
15 stop operating, we must remove the entirety all the
16 way down below ground so that the land can be
17 reestablished, and most of it is farmland, as
18 farmland. So that would present another type of
19 obligation through contractual.

20 Q. And would that be considered a legal ARO?

21 A. It would with that, yes.

22 Q. Okay. And then the nonlegal, you're not
23 legally bound to remove them?

24 A. We're aren't legally --

25 JUDGE FETCH: Ms. Perkett, could I ask you

1 to speak up just a little bit?

2 THE WITNESS: Oh, I'm sorry. I apologize.

3 JUDGE FETCH: And when you turn to the
4 side, that makes it even more difficult to project
5 out here.

6 THE WITNESS: Would this help? Okay.
7 Sorry.

8 Nonlegal AROs, for look of a better term,
9 it was -- the legal AROs were what they were and
10 everything else was coined nonlegal AROs. It is an
11 obligation, if you will, we are collecting it
12 through our depreciation rate, accumulating it in
13 accumulated depreciation. At the end of the day it
14 was required and allowed by a Commission. If it
15 isn't used for removal, let's say we don't need any
16 more poles and wires. Miraculous new technology
17 comes along, we don't need any poles and wires, now
18 we have to remove them all and we had extra, we
19 would have to ask the Commissions, each one of
20 them, what to do with that extra. Because it was
21 accumulated and collected through rates, it has to
22 be dealt with at the end through rates and
23 regulation.

24 Q. (COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK CONTINUING) If it
25 weren't for the financial reporting that you have

1 to do on the legal AROs, would you separate them?

2 A. We probably don't have them separated if
3 we weren't going to do it, but it actually helps to
4 see what's there. The reason they separated it out
5 in, I think it was 2005 it was required, and the
6 reason was, when you have removal in the normal
7 accumulated depreciation on the financial
8 statements, your net plant looks smaller. To an
9 investor it looks like you're better recovered on
10 your asset, your original cost of your asset,
11 because the removal is kind of dampening that net
12 plant. So it was a better presentation. That's
13 what the SEC wanted to show, true net plant on
14 original cost and put the removal piece off to the
15 side under regulatory liability. So you could see
16 both, but you had a better presentation of net
17 plant for the investor.

18 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Okay. Thank you.

19 THE WITNESS: Does that work on the
20 microphone?

21 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: That's all for
22 me.

23 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you, Commissioner.
24 Commissioner Kalk.

25 COMMISSIONER KALK: Thank you, Your Honor.

EXAMINATION

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BY COMMISSIONER KALK:

Q. Thank you, Lisa, for your testimony. I read through both sides of the argument and I really didn't have any questions when we started, but I think we'll just have to see what all shakes out in the discussion.

You did have a couple things that prompted two questions. One is to follow up when Commissioner Fedorchak and you were discussing about the wind farms. So built into these tables there is decommissioning plans cost allocated for taking down the wind farms?

A. That is correct. It's in the production depreciation.

Q. So how would that be listed? You said production so is there a certain table? Because I'm not that familiar with all the different --

A. There's a different table for production, yes.

Q. So could we glean out of this how much money Xcel -- that we're giving back Xcel, if you will, to decommission these wind farms?

A. Yes, we could. I believe it's around 8 percent of the total of the original cost of the

1 facility.

2 Q. Okay. Now, that's --

3 A. We can look it up. We do report
4 production separate from transmission, distribution
5 because for this Commission and all of NSP MN we do
6 not use a depreciation rate for production. We use
7 what's called a remaining life method, so we
8 take --

9 Q. Okay. So you feel -- 8 percent -- have
10 you done any testing on taking down wind farms that
11 8 percent is adequate?

12 A. We haven't taken any down, but we did have
13 an external engineering firm do a removal cost
14 estimate for us on our production facilities,
15 including the wind farms back in 2010. And so that
16 external engineering firm looked at all the removal
17 components, including offsetting the salvage
18 components so that we could get a good
19 representation of those removal costs, because as
20 you're hinting at, we haven't removed any, so where
21 do you get that information. And around the
22 country, you could look to others, but, again,
23 there hasn't been a lot of current type of wind
24 farms being removed, so went outside and got an
25 external engineering estimate on that.

1 Q. Is that something that you could provide
2 us pretty easy?

3 A. I could, and it might have already been
4 part of one of the discoveries, but, yes, it's very
5 easy to give you that.

6 Q. Okay. We'll look tonight and see if we
7 have it in there, Illona and I, and if we do, I
8 just wanted to look at that some more.

9 A. We could find a reference, if we can.

10 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: Commissioner, excuse
11 me. As a discovery item we would not have it with
12 the Commission. It would be with staff or the
13 Company. So if you wanted to look in your
14 discovery responses, that would be appreciated. If
15 it's an attachment to your testimony, we would all
16 have it.

17 THE WITNESS: No, it is not. It would be
18 discovery so we could provide it again.

19 COMMISSIONER KALK: Okay. Thank you.

20 Q. (COMMISSIONER KALK CONTINUING) And, quite
21 honestly, this is an example of a broader issue in
22 North Dakota of when they set up wind farms 10-year
23 grace period and now the Commission has the
24 authority we may go back and require bonding. And
25 so it's an issue that is surfacing to the top

1 inside the Commission, and it's helpful that you've
2 done this work that we may be able to use it for a
3 model for investor-owned, I could see, and maybe a
4 whole different model for privately-held wind
5 farms. So a sidebar.

6 A. Sure.

7 Q. The last question I had was, you talked
8 about the depreciation rates, three different
9 jurisdictions using three different rate. What if
10 at the end of the day they don't add up to what it
11 costs to take the thing down?

12 A. Well, in each jurisdiction we do it at
13 total company. So just to get complicated, I
14 apologize, let's just assume that we've got two
15 jurisdictions; one is using a 10-year depreciation
16 rate, recovering it over 10 years, and another one
17 is using a 20-year. Okay.

18 Technically, the 10-year when they got to
19 their 10-year, they would stop. They wouldn't have
20 any more depreciation and the 20-year would finish
21 out. So to make it easy -- because I can do the
22 simple math in my head. I don't have my ten-key
23 here -- each one is 50/50.

24 Q. So you're telling me that this is not
25 going to happen?

1 Q. It's listed as Attachment A, page 1 of
2 2 --

3 A. Okay.

4 Q. -- but it was the third sheet, it's
5 December 31st, 2011.

6 A. The one that says Attachment B, this one?

7 Q. No, it says Attachment A.

8 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: A, page 1 of 2.

9 THE WITNESS: Page 1 of 2. I'm sorry. I
10 heard 3, something for page 3. Okay.

11 Q. (COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN CONTINUING) I
12 don't understand what I have here, so it doesn't
13 matter which page so much, as long as we're on the
14 same one. (Laughter.)

15 A. Us accountants are complicated and
16 confusing because it keeps us employed. No, I'm
17 just kidding.

18 Q. I'm picking up two lines here so I can
19 reference them and ask questions.

20 A. Sure.

21 Q. I'm skipping the first one because it's
22 not identified in the description, but the second
23 and third lines are Black Dog and Minnesota Valley;
24 right?

25 A. Correct.

1 Q. We're on the same page. Okay. So the
2 asset retirement obligation liability, the first
3 column, that is how much you figure it would cost
4 to dismantle, clean up each of those facilities and
5 have it gone; correct?

6 A. Just for the legal obligation portion. So
7 it might be the asbestos, the lead, the oils, the
8 ash ponds, evaporation ponds and such that are at
9 Black Dog, and that is the current value today. So
10 it's not -- it will be inflated forward, accreted
11 forward to the final cost and that's what we will
12 spend.

13 So if I could go back to my example again,
14 that \$100 when we recognized the ARO liability,
15 when I say accrete forward, it will move from \$100
16 to \$150 and so that liability at the end of the day
17 will be \$150, and then when I spend for the removal
18 of asbestos, I will spend \$150 if I'm doing
19 financial reporting. Okay? I've got \$150 sitting
20 in my liability or savings account, I will spend
21 out of that. The cash will come out of there.

22 So at any point in time as you're moving
23 through from today to that future period, you can
24 take a look at what the liability is and that's
25 what its value is, so one year would be \$100 and

1 then it would be \$105, \$110 as you go through time.
2 And it's just a snapshot of that balance at this
3 point in time, December 2011.

4 Q. And that's why on the flip side the 2010
5 numbers were slightly smaller for each?

6 A. Correct. Correct.

7 Q. Okay. And then the asset retirement cost
8 asset line is what?

9 A. That is the amount of the asset that we
10 recognized when we originally put the ARO on the
11 balance sheet. Okay. So when we put the ARO in my
12 example on the balance sheet, we put \$100 on the
13 liability side and we put \$100 on the asset side,
14 because us accountants, liabilities and assets have
15 to balance.

16 The asset depreciates down to zero and has
17 actually an accumulated depreciation that's not part
18 of regulation that depreciates to \$100. So at the
19 end of the day, when I'm removing this liability, I
20 don't have any asset anymore. It's zero, because I
21 have accumulated depreciation of \$100. So it's a
22 zero. My liability is now at \$150. I retire my
23 asset retirement costs and accumulated
24 depreciation, get rid of that off the asset side,
25 and then I spend the liability down to zero.

1 Now, on the FASB rules, because they're
2 not the regulatory rules, the FASB rule says if you
3 have leftover, you know, it's a gain, and if you
4 have too little accumulated, you have to spend \$180
5 and you only have a \$150, you have a loss on the
6 income statement, but we don't -- we're regulated
7 and where we're going to spend our money for
8 removal is out of that accumulated or that reg
9 liability. And the ARO is always balanced to what
10 our total expectations are for those legal
11 obligations under what's in your studies, the
12 studies that we present to you and you've approved.

13 Q. But unlike the first column, which is
14 growing each year, this is the original amount?

15 A. Correct.

16 Q. So it stays the same throughout the time
17 period?

18 A. It does, unless we have a new estimate,
19 just to make things complicated.

20 Q. What would cause the Black Dog facility to
21 have a positive ARC asset when you first started
22 this and the Red Wing to have a negative?

23 A. I appreciate that question. When you
24 re-recognized it in 2005 for the first time, we
25 based it on an estimate that we had for the

1 contaminants, the legally obligated contaminants at
2 that point in time. As we go through time, we have
3 more removal cost estimates and we had one in 2010,
4 and that one adjusted what we thought some of the
5 numbers out there.

6 And just going back to asbestos, why would
7 asbestos change? You had asbestos in 2005, why
8 would it change? Well, when you're doing
9 maintenance out there, they may take out some of
10 the asbestos. If they're working on a piece of
11 equipment, they may clean out the asbestos at that
12 point in time. So the amount of asbestos may go
13 down just in normal operations and maintenance. So
14 when we reevaluate how much is asbestos, we have to
15 reevaluate the obligation, and the obligation, if
16 it goes down, brings the asset retirement cost
17 down, and it could send that cost -- it's just a
18 balancing factor -- it could bring it down below
19 zero.

20 It gets really complicated so I'm doing it
21 in 2010, I set the cost in 2010. So maybe a
22 simpler example. My \$100 example. I did it at the
23 point in time I set it up. Three years later I
24 came back and I realized that it went down. It
25 really isn't \$100 anymore. And my example won't

1 make it go negative, but it can be negative. I
2 realize it's \$50. Okay. So I'm going to have to
3 bring my liability down to the point where it is.
4 I also have to bring my costs down. Now, if you
5 remember, these asset retirement obligations and
6 costs were set up when we were originally obligated
7 for them. On Black Dog we were originally
8 obligated on asbestos in the 1950s. Okay. So the
9 asset cost was present valued all the way back to
10 1954, I believe it was. That's the cost, asset
11 retirement cost that went on the books, the 1954
12 cost.

13 Now, our liability has moved through time
14 and is now at 2011. The cost is still in 1954. If
15 it gets reevaluated at today's cost, it may
16 decrease more than I have -- the liability may
17 decrease more than I have the asset retirement cost
18 on the books.

19 Q. Okay. Third column is ARC reserve?

20 A. The ARC reserve is just the accumulated
21 depreciation on the ARC. And the ARC is
22 depreciated over the life of the asset. So at the
23 end of the asset, when the asset is retired, the
24 ARC reserve will equal the ARC asset, and then when
25 the asset is retired, those two are retired.

1 Now, the ARO may accrete forward after
2 that retirement because we may wait three years or
3 more on some assets before we have to retire them.
4 Especially on production, if you have multiple
5 units, you may take one unit down and put it in a
6 mothball state waiting for the second unit to come
7 down and then do the removal all together, because,
8 going back to your point, it's more cost effective
9 to do two together, rather than one and then the
10 other.

11 Q. And the regulatory asset?

12 A. The regulatory asset is our balancing
13 account. From an accounting perspective, at the
14 end of the day, when I'm at \$150, I have \$150 for
15 my reg liability, and I have \$150 for my ARO. My
16 liability is on asbestos. I've got it there twice,
17 if you really think about it. To balance that out,
18 I'll have \$150 on my reg asset for financial
19 purposes. The reg asset balances out the ARO, and
20 what remains on my financial statement is the reg
21 liability that has been accumulated through the
22 depreciation rate in your orders.

23 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: No further
24 questions. Thank you.

25 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you.

1 Mr. Johnson, do you have any redirect?

2 MR. JOHNSON: One area, Your Honor.

3 JUDGE FETCH: Go ahead.

4 **REDIRECT EXAMINATION**

5 **BY MR. JOHNSON:**

6 Q. Ms. Perkett, you had some discussion with
7 Mr. Norrell concerning your Table 4 and also the
8 effect of local regulations on the costs of
9 removal. Do you remember that generally?

10 A. Generally, yes.

11 Q. And you also had some discussion regarding
12 the effect of higher retirement or removal costs on
13 the distribution depreciation rate?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. I'd like to direct your attention back to
16 Table 4 for just a moment, which is on page 15 of
17 your direct.

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Let's see if I can find it now. And I'm
20 looking at the line entry for electric
21 distribution.

22 A. I'm there.

23 Q. Which states are involved in that line?

24 A. The total company one and the North Dakota
25 one is only the North Dakota assets.

1 Q. So to the extent that there were
2 regulations that were driving those distribution
3 costs, they're your estimates of the North Dakota
4 regulations and requirements?

5 A. That is based on that, yes.

6 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. No other
7 questions, Your Honor.

8 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you, Mr. Johnson.
9 Mr. Norrell, any further questions?

10 MR. NORRELL: No. Thank you, Your Honor.

11 JUDGE FETCH: Ms. Jeffcoat-Sacco, any
12 further questions?

13 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: No.

14 JUDGE FETCH: Commissioners, any further
15 questions? You're dismissed, Ms. Perkett.

16 THE WITNESS: Thank you very much.

17 JUDGE FETCH: And we're timely. It's five
18 minutes to five. We are going to stand in recess
19 until 6 p.m. for dinner and -- well, whenever.
20 Have dinner. Come back. We're going to reconvene
21 at six. And Mr. Sheldon will step in and tell us
22 how you can get back into the Capitol if you leave,
23 because I believe the doors will be locked and so
24 he'll need to get us back in.

25 So it appears to me, from the time

1 estimates, we might get through Scott Brockett and
2 Ann Bulkley yet. So we are in recess until 6 p.m.
3 Thank you.

4 (Recessed at 5:02 p.m. to 6:02 p.m.)

5 JUDGE FETCH: Let's come to order.

6 COMMISSIONER KALK: Like that, Your Honor.

7 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. Remind me to
8 take you to all my hearings and you can be the
9 gavel man. Are we on?

10 MR. SHELDON: Thank you.

11 JUDGE FETCH: All right. This hearing is
12 reconvened and the time is about 6:02 p.m., Central
13 Time, on August 27th, 2013, and at this time we'll
14 continue with the NSP case, and I believe you have
15 listed as your next witness, Mr. Johnson, would be
16 Scott Brockett?

17 MR. JOHNSON: That's correct, Your Honor.
18 We would wish to call Mr. Brockett as our next
19 witness.

20 JUDGE FETCH: Okay. Mr. Brockett. Good
21 evening. Mr. Brockett, were you here earlier when
22 I instructed as to penalties for perjury?

23 THE WITNESS: I was.

24 JUDGE FETCH: All right. Thank you. All
25 right. Mr. Brockett, would you raise your right

1 hand, please.

2 (Witness sworn.)

3 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. And I believe
4 your witness statement is being passed out. All
5 right.

6 Mr. Johnson, turn it over to you and this
7 is NSP Exhibit 28 and that was stipulated to, it is
8 admitted into the record.

9 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Your Honor.

10 **SCOTT BROCKETT,**

11 being first duly sworn, was examined and testified
12 as follows:

13 **DIRECT EXAMINATION**

14 **BY MR JOHNSON:**

15 Q. Mr. Brockett, your direct -- excuse me --
16 your rebuttal testimony has been marked and
17 received into evidence as NSP Exhibit 13. It's my
18 understanding you do not have any corrections that
19 need to be made to that.

20 A. That's correct.

21 Q. Do you have an opening statement?

22 A. I do have an opening statement.

23 Q. Please deliver that for the record.

24 A. Sure. My name is Scott Brockett. I am
25 director of regulatory administration and

1 compliance for Xcel Energy Services Incorporated.

2 In my rebuttal testimony I explain why the
3 Commission should continue to use the 12 CP method
4 to determine the North Dakota jurisdictional
5 portion of costs for our production and
6 transmission facilities. I also explain why the
7 Commission should not adopt the 1 CP method
8 recommended by the advocacy staff consultant, Karl
9 R. Pavlovic. As part of his recommendation, Dr.
10 Pavlovic proposes a \$20 million reduction in the
11 test year revenue requirement. As a result, use of
12 the right jurisdictional allocator is a critical
13 financial issue for the company.

14 As part of an integrated system, our
15 production and transmission facilities are used to
16 provide service to more than one state. As a
17 result, it is necessary to determine the North
18 Dakota portion of the cost of these facilities as
19 part of the process of setting our North Dakota
20 rates.

21 The Commission has historically applied
22 three criteria for selecting a method for
23 allocating costs to the North Dakota retail
24 jurisdiction: accuracy, stability, and consistency
25 with other jurisdictions. The weighted 12 CP

1 method we recommend meets all of the Commission's
2 criteria and should continue to be used in this
3 case.

4 Accuracy is the Commission's primary
5 criteria. The 12 CP method we have used in North
6 Dakota for about 20 years and again proposed in
7 this case most accurately captures the drivers of
8 our fixed production costs. The 12 CP method
9 recognizes that our fixed production costs are
10 incurred not only to ensure reliable service, but
11 also to minimize overall system energy costs over
12 the course of a year. Specifically, the 12 CP
13 method considers loads in all 12 months, thereby
14 recognizing that loads in all months contribute to
15 our overall system costs. The 12 CP method
16 recognizes that the costs incurred to ensure
17 reliable service (demand-related costs) cannot be
18 allocated to any specific hourly load in any
19 specific month, or even to a single season, because
20 we design and operate our system to ensure reliable
21 service at the least cost in all months. As a
22 result, potential loads in many different summer
23 hours, as well as hours outside the summer season,
24 also contribute to the need for production
25 capacity. The 12 CP method gives more weight to

1 summer peak loads, but also recognizes the
2 significance of peak demands in other months.

3 The 12 CP method also better captures the
4 drivers of our fixed transmission cost. The
5 company designs the various segments of its
6 transmission system to meet the peak demands of the
7 specific regions served by each segment of the
8 system. These regional peak demands are not
9 necessarily coincident with the NSPM coincident
10 peak, and may occur in the winter. Moreover, MISO
11 uses the 12 CP method as a basis for its monthly
12 transmission billings.

13 The Commission has found that it is
14 appropriate to recognize peak usage in all 12
15 months with a weighting that recognizes the added
16 significance of higher usage months. The 12 CP
17 method, which reflects peak loads in all months
18 with an added weighting of higher usage months,
19 meets the Commission criteria for accuracy.

20 The Commission has also recognized that
21 the 1 CP method was an inappropriate method to
22 determine the drivers of the company's costs
23 because it ignores the costs that off-peak
24 customers impose on the company's system.

25 The 12 CP method also yields more stable

1 results (the Commission's second criterion) than
2 the 1 CP method, because the 12 CP method takes
3 into consideration peak loads throughout the year.
4 As a result, year-to-year changes are smaller than
5 the changes under the 1 CP method that has been
6 recommended by the staff consultant in this case.
7 Such variability can have a significant impact on
8 test year revenue requirements and ultimately
9 electric rates.

10 The Commission's third criterion is
11 consistency with the approach used by other
12 jurisdictions. The 12 CP method is used by the
13 other four NSP system states and MISO. While this
14 factor may be less significant to the Commission,
15 it nevertheless points to the 12 CP method as the
16 best approach under the Commission's criteria.

17 Finally, as staff consultant Dr.
18 Pavlovic's supplemental testimony recognizes, the
19 NARUC Manual focuses on which method best reflects
20 the utility's actual system planning and operation.
21 My rebuttal testimony explains why the 12 CP best
22 reflects: (1) our planning and operation of
23 production facilities both to ensure very high
24 levels of reliability during the entire year and to
25 minimize system energy costs; and (2) the effects

1 of loads other than the system annual coincident
2 peak demand on our transmission planning, given the
3 need for each transmission facility to meet the
4 peak demand on that particular facility.

5 We submit that the 12 CP method that has
6 been in place for many years in North Dakota and
7 elsewhere should again be approved because it best
8 meets the three Commission criteria. It is
9 accurate, yields stable results, and is more
10 consistent with the methods approved by other
11 jurisdictions. In contrast, the staff consultant
12 has proposed the 1 CP method, which the Commission
13 has previously found to be inappropriate and has
14 rejected. Accordingly, the 12 CP method should be
15 adopted in this case.

16 MR. JOHNSON: Your Honor, Mr. Brockett is
17 available for cross-examination.

18 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you, Mr. Johnson. Mr.
19 Norrell.

20 MR. NORRELL: Thank you, Your Honor.

21 **CROSS-EXAMINATION**

22 **BY MR. NORRELL:**

23 Q. Mr. Brockett, good evening.

24 A. Hello.

25 Q. Could you state for the Commission what a

1 12 month coincident peak demand allocation method
2 is?

3 A. Yes. It's an approach or a method to
4 allocating cost to jurisdictions or customer
5 classes based on the respective contributions to
6 each of a -- each of the 12 month system peaks.

7 Q. And what is a 1 month coincidental demand
8 peak allocation method?

9 A. A 1 month coincidental peak demand
10 allocation is a method that allocates cost to
11 jurisdictions or customer classes based on their
12 contributions to the system annual coincident peak.

13 Q. Okay. Thank you. As you mentioned, the
14 advocacy staff witness recommends that this
15 Commission approve a change to the 1 month CP
16 method. In your testimony you state that the
17 Commission shouldn't change the jurisdictional
18 allocation methodology for two reasons, the first
19 reason is that it deviates from widely accepted
20 ratemaking principles. If the 1 CP method deviates
21 from widely accepted ratemaking principles, can you
22 explain why it's included in the NARUC Manual as a
23 valid cost allocation method?

24 A. Could you refer to me the citation in my
25 testimony?

1 Q. Oh, I apologize. This was actually a
2 question that was -- I believe, was posed to Ms.
3 McCarten, but she thought that you would be able to
4 answer. I guess the question is just -- I'll just
5 dumb it down to this. Is the -- is the -- does the
6 NARUC Manual approve 1 CP?

7 A. The NARUC Manual includes the 1 CP method
8 as one of the alternatives for allocating
9 production and transmission costs.

10 Q. So it would be an approved methodology; is
11 that correct?

12 A. I hesitate to use the word "approved" in
13 the context of the NARUC Manual because, in my
14 opinion, the NARUC Manual provides guidance, it
15 lists some alternatives for commissions to consider
16 and provides some very general guidance as to when
17 these methods might be more or less applicable, but
18 I wouldn't go so far as to say that the NARUC
19 Manual either endorses or proposes a method.

20 Q. But it proposes it as a valid method --
21 the 1 CP method?

22 A. Yes, it includes it as a potential method.

23 Q. The company has applied for some other
24 advance determination and prudence such as the two
25 Red River Valley units potentially built in North

1 Dakota. One of the things they talk about is these
2 units need to be built to meet peak demand -- not
3 peaks, just peak demand. Why wouldn't the company
4 build a unit to meet more than one peak or is it
5 just one peak?

6 A. As I explained in my testimony, I think
7 the level and mix of our generation fleet as well
8 as the power purchase, for that matter, depends on
9 a couple of factors. One is the need to provide
10 reliable service over the course of the year and
11 the second is to minimize total energy cost. When
12 you're talking about having total capacity be the
13 system peak, it begs the question, well, when is
14 that system peak going to occur. And on the NSP
15 system that system peak can occur in a number of
16 different hours during the course of the year.

17 And as I went on to explain in my
18 testimony, even if you can bound the potential
19 hours to some limited period, which I'm not sure
20 you can, you also have to bring in planned
21 maintenance, diversity exchanges, things like that,
22 that might affect your probability of losing load
23 during any one hour any specific period. My
24 contention is those factors in turn affect what
25 plants you're going to install either for

1 reliability or to minimize the energy cost or for
2 both.

3 Q. For the summer of 2013, MISO has changed
4 its methodologies to provide a credit for utilities
5 that don't peak with MISO's summer peak. Isn't
6 that similar to what North Dakota is requesting in
7 this situation to be recognized for not
8 contributing to the company's summer peak?

9 A. I'm not familiar with that change that
10 you're referring to for MISO.

11 Q. You had mentioned trying to allocate the
12 peak for the year to a number of hours. Wouldn't
13 you say if you can allocate the biggest load of the
14 year to a number of hours and the company can meet
15 that load, can't it meet the peak load in any of
16 the other 12 months?

17 A. Could you repeat that question?

18 Q. If you can meet the peak load of the year,
19 wouldn't it follow that you can meet the peak load
20 at any of the other 12 months -- or the other 11
21 months of the year?

22 A. Well, when you say can we meet the peak
23 load of the year, I would first point out that
24 that's certainly a legitimate planning criteria and
25 an important one, but it begs the question when

1 that peak hour is going to occur, which you can't
2 predict. It's not stochastic or random. You can
3 bound it, but you don't know when it's going to
4 occur so you can't say, well, I'm going to install
5 a level of production capacity to meet the load
6 that I predict on July 15th at 3:00 p.m. You don't
7 know when that peak load is going to occur, and
8 that was the point I was trying to bring up, that
9 even to the extent that's the salient planning
10 criterion, it still begs the question of what
11 period you're going to consider relevant in terms
12 of actually experiencing net peak hour or hours.

13 Q. Couldn't you look at historical data to
14 determine on a yearly basis what that -- within
15 reason -- obviously we can't get a precise hour,
16 date and minute, but within reason, can't you look
17 at historical data and see where that historically
18 has lain, that peak load?

19 A. You can, and I would add that that's one
20 of the reasons why I provided that loss of load
21 probability study as a check on the reasonableness
22 of the methods because it tries to do just that.
23 It considers not only the probability of when the
24 peak load is going to occur but also maintenance
25 and forced outages, diversity exchanges, all the

1 other factors that affect whether you may or may
2 not have sufficient capacity. I think it's a
3 better way of doing that than just looking at when
4 peak loads have occurred on a historical basis.

5 Q. On page 3 of your testimony you state that
6 the 12 CP methodology is the preferred methodology
7 among the various jurisdictions served by the
8 company. What evidence do you have to support that
9 statement?

10 A. What I was referring to with that
11 statement is that the 12 CP method is used by the
12 commissions in Minnesota and South Dakota and North
13 Dakota historically for the purpose of determining
14 the percentage of production and transmission costs
15 that would be allocated to their respective
16 jurisdictions.

17 Q. Have any other jurisdictions expressed any
18 concern in regards to the 12 CP?

19 A. Yeah, you mean Minnesota or South Dakota?

20 Q. Or are you aware of any besides the four
21 that NSP is involved in anywhere in the country, or
22 is this uniformly adopted?

23 A. Oh, no, I wouldn't say that the 12 CP
24 method is uniformly adopted, no. I know that there
25 are other utilities that don't use the 12 CP

1 method.

2 Q. Can you describe what a combined system
3 is? I read somewhere that the NSP system operates
4 as a combined system.

5 A. I would prefer to have a specific citation
6 so I can better familiarize myself with the
7 context. In my opinion, a combined system refers
8 to a system that serves more than one jurisdiction,
9 but the dispatch occurs on a combined basis so that
10 it's basically operating as if it were one system.

11 Q. So then the Xcel Energy Company, is that
12 treated as a single entity for production and
13 transmission costs?

14 A. Xcel Energy is not, no.

15 Q. Or, I'm sorry, NSPM.

16 A. NSP-Minnesota I would characterize as a
17 combined system for production, anyway, not for
18 distribution.

19 Q. How does a 12 CP methodology minimize
20 energy costs?

21 A. No allocation method minimizes energy
22 cost. What a 12 CP method attempts to do is
23 account for the fact that one of the company's
24 goals is minimizing energy cost, and we are
25 determining the costs out to be allocated to a

1 specific jurisdiction, that factor ought to be
2 considered in the development of the allocation
3 factor or the selection of the allocation factor.

4 Q. Does it minimize rates at all to
5 ratepayers?

6 A. No. In my opinion, you should not, and
7 really cannot at the end of the day, choose an
8 allocation method that minimizes cost. The whole
9 point of an allocation method is to take a pie of
10 cost and split it up into different slices. As I
11 point out in my testimony, various jurisdictions
12 acting in concert could adopt different allocation
13 methods that leave the utility short so it doesn't
14 recover all its costs. In that respect, I wouldn't
15 say that was necessarily a principled approach, but
16 that could be one way in which an allocation method
17 could be construed as minimizing costs to customers
18 by making the shareholders bear some of them.

19 Q. On page 4 of your rebuttal testimony,
20 lines 6 to 13, I was just wondering if you could
21 clarify. You state that the Commission has, in
22 part, approved using -- that would be line 9 and
23 10, then again at 13 it states the Commission. Are
24 you referring to the North Dakota Commission?

25 A. Give me one second while I refamiliarize.

1 Q. Sure.

2 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: What page is it,
3 Ryan?

4 MR. NORRELL: Page 4.

5 THE WITNESS: I'm referring to the North
6 Dakota Commission.

7 Q. (MR. NORRELL CONTINUING) Okay. And you
8 state that proceedings where intervenors have
9 proposed the 1 CP method, the Commission has
10 consistently rejected these proposals. Do you know
11 that the Commission has consistently rejected
12 these?

13 A. I know that from the research that I've
14 conducted that there were three prior cases, I
15 think one was a docket in 1987, one was a docket in
16 1991, and one was a docket in 1992. The latter two
17 were rate cases. I'm not sure about the 1987 case.
18 The upshot is in each case the Commission confirmed
19 the 12 CP method as the appropriate allocator.

20 Q. Were these North Dakota intervenors, do
21 you know, in those matters where 1 CP was proposed?

22 A. I don't recall.

23 Q. Ms. McCarten had earlier stated that there
24 was -- in 1986 12 CP was adopted, in 1991 it was
25 adopted, in 1992 it was readopted. That would lead

1 me to believe that somewhere between '86 and '92 if
2 it was readopted -- are you familiar, was there a
3 point where 1 CP was actually adopted in the State
4 of North Dakota between 1986 and 1992?

5 A. I had a little difficulty piecing together
6 that chronology, to tell you the truth. That case
7 in '87 that I looked at, the final decision after
8 appeal or whatever didn't come out until 1992, so I
9 guess while that was in abeyance, I assume there
10 was some method in place. I can't say for sure
11 what it was. What I do know in the 1991, 1992
12 cases, which were resolved on a more expeditious
13 basis, that the 12 CP method was approved. So I'm
14 a little bit unclear as to what was actually in
15 effect during that period you're talking about.

16 Q. Were you aware that in the approximately
17 2000 era there was a demand allocator factor for
18 the NSP plus plan that was a 36-month allocator?
19 Were you aware of that at all in your research?

20 A. No.

21 Q. If that were true, wouldn't that speak to
22 the fact that commissions can change and adopt the
23 demand allocation method?

24 A. I think it would depend on what context
25 that was approved and how it was applied.

1 Q. You state -- or I think in your opening
2 statement you mention it too -- that the 12 CP
3 method produces more stable results. Does that
4 mean that the 1 CP methodology is inherently
5 unstable?

6 A. I'm speaking in relative terms. I don't
7 want to characterize one as stable and one as
8 unstable. If you compare the results of the two,
9 what I can say unequivocally is that both on a
10 conceptual and empirical basis, it appears that the
11 12 CP method is more stable, and I put a page in my
12 Schedule 2 to try to demonstrate that.

13 Q. Why would 12 CP predict peak load any more
14 accurately than 1 CP -- the hour? I'm sorry.

15 A. I wouldn't -- again, I don't think it
16 does, and that's not really necessarily the point
17 of a cost allocation method. A cost allocation
18 method is supposed to allocate or assign costs to
19 jurisdictions based on the costs that they actually
20 impose on the system to the best you can identify
21 it.

22 My point is the 12 CP method best
23 accounts -- or better accounts, I should say, for
24 the drivers of the company's costs than the 1 CP
25 method. And one of the basic premises of my

1 testimony is you can't simply look at one hour and
2 say, well, by definition that's the drivers of the
3 company's cost. That's the premise I reject.

4 Q. Well, didn't you earlier say that that is
5 one of the drivers of the cost, is meeting that --
6 I believe you said -- and I apologize, I didn't
7 write it down -- that 12 CP hopes to meet that peak
8 demand as does 1 CP. Why is one any better than
9 the other?

10 A. Well, if I said that, I misspoke. I don't
11 think any one allocation method accomplishes that
12 goal. What I was trying to suggest is that I
13 understand the company looks at its peak load or
14 peak loads that it expects during the course of the
15 year to form its planning. That's what I was
16 agreeing to. But an allocation method doesn't in
17 any sense drive the company's cost.

18 MR. NORRELL: Just a second. I need to
19 confer with my --

20 JUDGE FETCH: Go ahead.

21 Q. (MR. NORRELL CONTINUING) I have a
22 question about the projected test year. What are
23 you using to base your 2013 loads on for the test
24 year purposes?

25 A. The 12 CP allocator is based on our

1 projected monthly peak loads for NSP-Minnesota and
2 in this case for the jurisdiction of North Dakota.

3 Q. So it's an estimate that you're using?

4 A. Yes, it is an estimate.

5 Q. You mentioned that the 12 CP method should
6 be continued to be used because it provides for a
7 total recovery of costs among the jurisdictions
8 within the system, but if all the jurisdictions
9 switch to 1 CP, wouldn't that lead to a total
10 recovery of costs?

11 A. Yes. The point is that if a consistent
12 allocation method is used, then the utility will
13 collect a hundred percent of its prudently incurred
14 cost. And that can occur no matter -- to satisfy
15 that goal alone, that can occur under a number of
16 different allocation methods.

17 Q. I apologize. I've got to log back into
18 the iPad here.

19 On page 19 of your testimony you stated
20 that the 12 CP method is the most commonly used
21 method; is that correct?

22 A. Can you give me a citation?

23 Q. I guess it's put in a question-and-answer
24 format. It says, Is there any evidence -- line 14
25 through 16 -- Is there any evidence that the 12 CP

1 method is more commonly used across the country,
2 and then your answer is in the affirmative?

3 A. Yes, in that particular citation I'm
4 simply quoting from the NARUC Manual.

5 Q. In your Exhibit 2 you show the monthly
6 North Dakota system peaks. Are these showing --
7 are these showing high peaks or are these pretty
8 level? What's your analysis of this data from
9 month to month?

10 A. You're talking about the North Dakota?

11 Q. Yes -- I'm sorry -- the North Dakota
12 peaks.

13 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Ryan, what
14 exhibit are you on?

15 MR. NORRELL: I'm on Exhibit -- it's
16 actually marked Schedule 2.

17 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: On the rebuttal
18 testimony?

19 MR. NORRELL: Yes, Mr. Brockett's
20 rebuttal.

21 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Okay.

22 THE WITNESS: And, I'm sorry, your
23 question to me is whether I detect any unusual
24 pattern in them or --

25 Q. (MR. NORRELL CONTINUING) Well, just

1 the -- are the peaks constant or do they vary
2 greatly?

3 A. The peaks vary. In terms of greatly, I
4 don't know whether they vary any more or less than
5 someone would expect.

6 Q. Looking at 2012, the actuals, this would
7 be on page 1, what would you say the difference
8 between the April system peak and the July system
9 peak is?

10 A. Well, it looks roughly -- I can't do the
11 math too accurately in my head. It looks like the
12 difference is about 150 megawatts.

13 Q. I was referring to the actual system, the
14 total, on this one. I apologize.

15 A. Oh, I'm sorry. You're looking at the
16 total CP for NSP-Minnesota?

17 Q. Yes.

18 A. That difference looks like it's about 3
19 -- let's see -- about 3,300 megawatts.

20 Q. Just under 50 percent difference between
21 April and July?

22 A. Well, let's see. Can I use my calculator?

23 Q. Sure. That's fine.

24 A. All right. 049 -- I come up with about 41
25 percent.

1 Q. What would the same ratio be for the North
2 Dakota differential between July and April of 2012?

3 A. About 34 percent, but I'm using July as
4 the base. It's the percentage April varies from
5 July. If you do it the reverse, you'll come up
6 with a different percentage.

7 Q. Does the NARUC Manual state that no single
8 cost methodology would be superior to any other? I
9 believe you testified to this, as a matter of fact.

10 A. I don't recall a specific statement, but
11 that's the tone of it, yes.

12 Q. On page 6 of your testimony, lines 21
13 through 24, you state, "These methods are laid out
14 here to reveal their flexibility; they can be seen
15 as maps and the road you take is the one that best
16 suits you." Where does that quote come from?

17 A. I don't recall. It would take me a little
18 bit to try to find it in the manual.

19 Q. Earlier in that same question you mention
20 that -- I believe you're quoting from the NARUC
21 Manual.

22 A. I am, yes. I'm trying to find it now. On
23 my version it would be page 68. It would be the
24 last sentence of Chapter 4.

25 Q. Do you know upon what basis a method would

1 be revised according to the NARUC Manual?

2 A. I would -- to answer that question, I
3 think you have to, first of all, understand that
4 the NARUC Manual, what it really does is it lays
5 out various options for commissions and
6 stakeholders in regulatory proceedings to consider.
7 It talks very generally and briefly about the
8 conditions under which one might be preferred over
9 another, but I wouldn't characterize the NARUC
10 Manual as giving very specific guidance as to what
11 method is better. I think what the authors were
12 saying is, look, you know, if we were going to have
13 a manual like that, it would be about 2,000 pages,
14 but we'll just provide some general guidance and
15 emphasize to the practitioners that these are the
16 considerations that are important when developing
17 the allocation methods.

18 Q. You would agree that peak demand methods
19 are considered appropriate by the NARUC Manual; is
20 that correct?

21 A. Well, peak demand methods are certainly
22 included in the NARUC Manual as options. Again, I
23 hesitate to use the word "appropriate." I think
24 the whole point of the manual is they're saying
25 here's some options, you decide the extent to which

1 one or more are appropriate based on the specific
2 circumstances of your utilities.

3 MR. NORRELL: Okay. Judge, can I ask for
4 just a minute, please, off record?

5 JUDGE FETCH: Yes, you may.

6 MR. NORRELL: I apologize. Can we take a
7 five-minute break, Judge?

8 JUDGE FETCH: All right. We'll take five
9 minutes.

10 MR. NORRELL: Thank you.

11 (Recess taken.)

12 JUDGE FETCH: We'll come back to order.

13 Mr. Norrell, you were in the middle of questioning
14 Mr. Brockett.

15 MR. NORRELL: Thank you, Judge. Thank
16 you, Mr. Brockett.

17 Q. (MR. NORRELL CONTINUING) I'd like to draw
18 your attention to the NARUC Manual, which you
19 have -- I believe it is in front of you.
20 Approximately page 46 of that, it reads, where
21 monthly peaks lie within -- a 12 CP method is used
22 where monthly peaks lie within a narrow range; is
23 that correct?

24 A. I see that citation, yes.

25 Q. And it also says, the 12 CP method may be

1 appropriate when the utility plans its maintenance
2 to have equal reserve margins; is that correct?

3 A. I see that citation as well.

4 MR. NORRELL: Your Honor, may I approach
5 the witness stand?

6 JUDGE FETCH: You may.

7 MR. NORRELL: Thank you, Your Honor. What
8 I have handed out is a chart based on the
9 aforementioned Schedule 2 in Mr. Brockett's
10 testimony regarding the total CP column for 2005
11 through 2012.

12 Q. (MR. NORRELL CONTINUING) Mr. Brockett,
13 would you say these numbers in general, do they
14 look accurate to you based on --

15 MR. JOHNSON: Your Honor, may I ask a
16 question for purposes of just determining where
17 this came from and who prepared it?

18 JUDGE FETCH: Yes, Mr. Johnson.

19 MR. JOHNSON: Mr. Brockett, have you seen
20 this before?

21 THE WITNESS: No.

22 MR. JOHNSON: Mr. Norrell, could you
23 provide a little bit more background as to what
24 this is and where it came from?

25 MR. NORRELL: Just a second, please. This

1 was prepared, Your Honor, in Mr. -- I'm sorry. Mr.
2 Johnson, this was prepared from the Schedule 2
3 provided by Mr. Brockett by Ms. Cardwell, a
4 research analyst here at the Public Service
5 Commission.

6 JUDGE FETCH: Mr. Johnson, any other
7 questions?

8 MR. JOHNSON: No, Your Honor. Thank you.

9 JUDGE FETCH: Are you intending to offer
10 this as an exhibit --

11 MR. NORRELL: Yes, actually --

12 JUDGE FETCH: -- or is this just for him
13 to refer to?

14 MR. NORRELL: Actually as an exhibit, Your
15 Honor. I would like to propose this as PSC Exhibit
16 11 -- or 12.

17 JUDGE FETCH: This would be 12. Any
18 objections, Mr. Johnson?

19 MR. JOHNSON: Your Honor, we're not going
20 to object. We're working and quite comfortable
21 with the assumption that it's been accurately
22 prepared by staff.

23 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. Then I will
24 admit PSC Exhibit 12.

25 Mr. Norrell, continue.

1 MR. NORRELL: Thank you.

2 Q. (MR. NORRELL CONTINUING) Looking at this
3 graph of monthly system peaks since 2005, would you
4 say NSP's monthly peaks lie within a narrow range?

5 A. I think I'd say they lie within a typical
6 range.

7 Q. What would be defined as a typical range?

8 A. I'm thinking about a typical utility that
9 might have a normal mix of customers and normal mix
10 of end uses of those customers.

11 JUDGE FETCH: Could you speak up just a
12 bit, please.

13 THE WITNESS: Oh, sure. I'm talking about
14 a utility that might have a normal mix of customers
15 and those customers might have a normal array of
16 end uses, and I would expect to see variations in
17 the monthly peak demands as exhibited in this graph
18 here. I kind of hesitate whether they're narrow,
19 wide. I really -- I really don't know how to
20 answer that question.

21 Q. (MR. NORRELL CONTINUING) But the NARUC
22 Manual -- we're talking a 3 million kilowatt here
23 between, you know, looking at maybe April and as
24 opposed to -- there's a 3 million kilowatt
25 difference between April and July; would you agree

1 with that?

2 A. Those numbers look to be about the slice
3 of the difference, yes.

4 Q. The NARUC Manual states again that the
5 12 CP method should be used where there's a narrow
6 range; is that correct?

7 A. I think that's a very incomplete
8 characterization. What the NARUC Manual says is
9 that one indicator is of -- when the 12 CP method
10 might be appropriate is when the monthly peaks lie
11 within a narrow range. The manual goes on to say
12 the 12 CP method may be appropriate when the
13 utility plans its maintenance so as to have equal
14 reserve margins, loss of load probabilities, or
15 other reliability index values in all months.

16 I would also add that the NARUC Manual,
17 the sum total of its discussion, the 12 CP method,
18 is about a half a page, including the table. So I
19 caution against in looking at this NARUC Manual
20 reading it verbatim and saying, okay, these are the
21 conditions under which we ought to use the 12 CP
22 method, or any other method, for that matter.
23 That's why in my testimony I went through the
24 specifics of how we plan our system and what drives
25 our costs, because I don't think you can just read

1 these couple paragraphs and come to any conclusion.

2 Q. Does NSP plan its maintenance so as to
3 have the same reliability index each month?

4 A. It does not plan its maintenance to have
5 the same index each month, but from a practical
6 perspective, it schedules its maintenance of its
7 generation units during the shorter periods,
8 perhaps a little bit more during the winter so that
9 those reserve margins are much -- I should say the
10 dispersion of those reserve margins from month to
11 month are much narrower than would be suggested by
12 this exhibit you've introduced, and that's one of
13 the reasons why I think it's very dangerous to rely
14 solely on these exhibits or on loads in general.

15 Q. Is there targeted reserve margins that NSP
16 uses?

17 A. I'm sure there is, yes, for planning
18 reserve purposes. I don't know what it is in the
19 NSP-Minnesota footprint.

20 Q. Do you know if the use of a reliability
21 index is described in any planning and cost
22 allocation documents provided by NSP in this case?

23 A. I'm sorry. Could you repeat that
24 question.

25 Q. Is the use of a reliability index or

1 reserve margin -- is that described, do you know,
2 in any of the documents submitted by NSP in this
3 case? Can we find an answer to the earlier
4 question as to how do you plan your maintenance so
5 that there's a reliability index? You said you
6 weren't sure earlier. I'm just wondering if we can
7 find it somewhere.

8 A. Well, just to be clear with the record,
9 what I said is I'm pretty sure we don't plan our
10 system so that we equalize the reliability indexes
11 each month. I'm saying from a practical
12 perspective, we plan maintenance and enter into
13 diversity exchanges with other power providers and
14 take other steps so that the margins from month to
15 month are much more similar than they would be --
16 than you would conclude just by looking at peak
17 loads.

18 Q. Could you describe what demand-related
19 production costs would be?

20 A. The definition -- there's various
21 definitions of demand-related production costs, but
22 I would -- I would characterize demand-related
23 production costs as the fixed costs of our
24 production facilities that are incurred to ensure
25 reliable service to customers.

1 Q. What is an energy-related production cost?
2 What's that definition?

3 A. I'm not sure if there's any one commonly
4 accepted definition. In my testimony I mention
5 that the prime example is fuel cost and variable
6 operation and maintenance expenses. And then also,
7 depending on how a practitioner uses this cost, the
8 capital cost of intermediate and baseload units
9 that are above the cost of an equivalent peaker can
10 also be considered energy-related costs.

11 MR. NORRELL: I believe that's all my
12 questions for now, Your Honor.

13 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you, Mr. Norrell. Ms.
14 Jeffcoat-Sacco.

15 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: Yes, I have a couple
16 of questions.

17 **CROSS-EXAMINATION**

18 **BY MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO:**

19 Q. I'm going to start with the last one
20 because I was just looking at something in your
21 testimony -- your rebuttal testimony towards the
22 end about meeting the Commission's third criterion,
23 and then I went back to find where in your rebuttal
24 testimony or anywhere else do you tell us the
25 Commission criterion -- or criteria for choosing an

1 allocation factor because I'm not finding it. And
2 I'm sure it's here.

3 A. I thought I listed those criteria early in
4 my testimony. On page 2, lines 13 through 19.

5 Q. Okay. I did see that, but -- and I even
6 have it marked. However, do you have a citation of
7 -- is it the case in the footnote 400-87-6 that
8 established the criteria, or all of them or -- I'm
9 just a little confused and I don't have all those
10 orders in front of me.

11 A. I would have to go back and check and see
12 which specific orders dealt with each of the three
13 criteria or whether they all did. I can't answer
14 that.

15 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: Does anyone have
16 copies of those orders available? I mean, I can
17 find them later another time, but I just didn't
18 know if you had them right here.

19 JUDGE FETCH: Mr. Johnson.

20 MR. JOHNSON: Your Honor, I do not have
21 them with me. We can certainly make them
22 available, but we would not be able to do it while
23 Mr. Brockett is on the stand unless he happens to
24 have them with him.

25 JUDGE FETCH: Mr. Brockett, do you happen

1 to have those?

2 THE WITNESS: Well, I have some of them.

3 Q. (MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO CONTINUING) I guess
4 what I was wondering is, the way your testimony is
5 worded, it sounds like a very specific -- like the
6 order said here's the three things that this
7 Commission looks at to set a jurisdictional
8 allocation factor, but I, going from memory, don't
9 recall that -- I don't have the orders in front of
10 me -- and I need to know if that's what you're
11 saying or if you're generalizing in your testimony.

12 A. I can't verify the specific verbiage,
13 whether it's exactly lifted from an order, but I
14 put those in there because I believed at the time I
15 wrote that testimony they reflected what the
16 Commission provided for in its previous orders.

17 Q. Well, I think maybe for tomorrow we will
18 try to get to the bottom of that because I think
19 the Commission would appreciate copies. We'll
20 either make them from you or we'll find them and
21 we'll see -- perhaps you might have to come back to
22 the stand on that, but we'll see what the criteria
23 actually is in those orders.

24 JUDGE FETCH: Mr. Johnson.

25 MR. JOHNSON: Your Honor, we do in fact

1 have copies of the orders available here. I'm not
2 sure that that addresses the point that's being
3 made in terms of availability, but we do have them
4 and copies could be made.

5 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: And I think it would
6 be okay to make it after, if that's all right,
7 because we would all have to read through them to
8 answer the question and we don't have time to do
9 that right now, if that's all right.

10 JUDGE FETCH: Well, we could take a
11 recess.

12 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: It's up to the
13 Commission. We can revisit it in the morning.

14 COMMISSIONER KALK: When I talked to
15 Illona --

16 JUDGE FETCH: Commissioner Kalk.

17 COMMISSIONER KALK: If I could, Your
18 Honor, when I talked to Illona, I just -- your
19 statement -- I just want somewhere to show me
20 verbatim it says what you said. So that's the
21 part. I don't want a bunch of orders saying
22 general. It's something that says these are the
23 three criteria that some commission put in some
24 order at some point in time, that's the specific
25 piece that I think we're talking about. So that's

1 where it would be helpful if the company went
2 through and if you could find that and just pass
3 that copy out tomorrow.

4 JUDGE FETCH: I have a suggestion,
5 Commissioner Kalk. It's just about seven o'clock.
6 When we finish with this witness, we're going to
7 try at least to get part of the next witness's
8 testimony. Maybe during that time this witness
9 could look through those orders and attempt to find
10 that language and that way we could still recall
11 him to the stand. Does that work?

12 MR. JOHNSON: Your Honor, I have a
13 suggestion that may be very similar to yours. We
14 do have the orders, I've read them, I know the
15 passages are in there. I think if we took a
16 corresponding five-minute recess, Mr. Brockett
17 could speak to the questions right now.

18 JUDGE FETCH: Let's take five minutes.

19 (Recess taken.)

20 JUDGE FETCH: All right. We are back on
21 the record. It is about 8 minutes after 7:00 p.m.,
22 Central Time.

23 And, Mr. Johnson, I believe you gave me
24 the high sign. Did your witness find the
25 information?

1 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, Your Honor.

2 JUDGE FETCH: Okay. And, Ms.

3 Jeffcoat-Sacco, you were asking questions of Mr.
4 Brockett, so I believe he has now the information
5 in front of him. Do you remember the question or
6 do you need to have it repeated, Mr. Brockett?

7 THE WITNESS: No, I remember it.

8 JUDGE FETCH: Okay.

9 THE WITNESS: I did find the citation, I
10 think, and there's two citations actually. The
11 first one is Case No. PU-400-92-399. It's findings
12 of fact, conclusions of law and order on
13 reconsideration dated April 7th, 1993, and it's
14 paragraph 5 in findings of facts, and I quote, "The
15 standards we look to in determining an appropriate
16 allocation factor are fair cost apportionment,
17 consistency among jurisdictions, and administrative
18 ease."

19 Q. (MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO CONTINUING) What
20 finding number was that?

21 A. That's finding of fact 5. And then to
22 interpret what's meant by "administrative ease," we
23 went back to -- goodness -- it's the same case
24 number, Case No. PU-400-92-399, this is findings of
25 fact, conclusions of law and order dated December

1 15th, 1992, and on paragraph -- yeah, paragraph 11,
2 these same standards are fleshed out a little bit
3 more by this staff -- or Commission consultant Dr.
4 Larry Dobesh, and under 11(c) specifically he
5 defines "administrative ease" as a jurisdictional
6 allocation method -- or he defines "administrative
7 ease" as occurring when a jurisdictional allocation
8 method should be understandable, inexpensive to
9 administer, and not result in large swings in
10 jurisdictional cost responsibility over time, which
11 in my mind then provides a context for what's meant
12 later by "administrative ease," which would
13 encompass both the ease of coming up with the
14 allocator and the fact that it's stable.

15 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: Okay. And the dates
16 again? I think it was April 7th, '93, and December
17 something of '92, and many of us know what happened
18 at the end of that year. Between the first order
19 and the reconsideration order we had a change in a
20 Commission -- change in Commissioner. So, anyway,
21 we have two orders. Thank you. I do appreciate
22 that. And I will get copies of that at least for
23 staff. If Commissioners want it, they can have it
24 also.

25 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: New commissioners

1 are nothing but trouble.

2 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: New commissioners
3 make trouble, yes.

4 JUDGE FETCH: I sort of resent that. That
5 second date was December 15th, 1992.

6 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: 15th. Okay. Thank
7 you for looking that up.

8 THE WITNESS: You're welcome.

9 Q. (MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO CONTINUING) I wanted
10 to ask you when we were talking about the NARUC
11 Allocation Manual and you were talking about the
12 general guidelines, there's not a lot of
13 information, there's half a page. Short of simply
14 looking at company testimony, where would someone
15 go for more specific guidance on how to do
16 jurisdictional allocation? I recognize your
17 testimony lays out how you think it should be done,
18 staff testimony lays out how they think it should
19 be done, and the Commission obviously laid it out
20 in '92 and '93 how they think it should be done.
21 But is there -- are there some resources that we
22 can look at -- professional resources since the
23 NARUC Manual you're saying is more general and
24 simply, you know, lays out a general road map but
25 not the specific guidance. Is there anything else

1 we can look to that is a neutral professional
2 resource?

3 A. Well, here's as I see the dilemma. I
4 don't fault the NARUC Manual for being laid out as
5 it is because I think the point they're trying to
6 make is, look, we can provide these general
7 criteria, but it really comes down to an in-depth
8 look at each utility, and breaching that gap
9 between the in-depth look for a utility and this
10 general guidance is sometimes difficult to do, you
11 know, and I guess it depends on the practitioner,
12 what authoritative sources they might find useful.
13 For example, I'm old enough that I remember when I
14 first started, they had those old gray book series
15 that were the Public Utilities Regulatory Policy
16 Act. They had a whole series on marginal costing
17 and all that. I found those very useful to
18 understand the economics of system planning, but
19 maybe someone else wouldn't. So I can't give you
20 any one source to go to.

21 Q. I think we threw all those away out of our
22 vault. I'm sure they were there at one point in
23 time.

24 I did have a question on page 13 on your
25 rebuttal, lines 21 through 23. You say, The 12 CP

1 method (as applied in this proceeding), and I
2 assume you mean as the company applied it in their
3 application, but you can correct me if I'm wrong,
4 assigns weights based solely on the differences in
5 their magnitudes, weights to the 12 loads -- peak
6 loads. Can you explain how the weighting is done,
7 and are you then suggesting a weighted 12 CP, as I
8 recall it being called, or not?

9 A. Yeah, you know, and I'm not familiar with
10 the history of what was called weighted in North
11 Dakota and what wasn't. I'm very hesitant to put
12 those labels on it because what I mean by weighting
13 is that when we develop our 12 CP, we simply sum
14 the monthly peaks for the system, we sum the
15 monthly peaks for North Dakota, we take North
16 Dakota divided by the system peak -- the
17 NSP-Minnesota peak and come up with a percentage.
18 If you work through the algebra of that, what
19 happens is that months where there's greater loads,
20 they contribute more to the numerator and the
21 denominator. In that sense there's a weighting.
22 But I don't want to imply that there's any real
23 strong conceptual framework for that particular
24 weighting. It's just that it happens to have the
25 benefit, if you will, of giving more weight to high

1 load months.

2 Q. Okay. That explains it. I also need --
3 and I apologize for not getting a clear explanation
4 of this from the testimony, but this loss of load
5 probability, the LOLP method. Are we talking about
6 another subpart of 12 CP that has this LOLP
7 component, or is that something that you were --
8 just explain it to me at the fourth-grade level, if
9 you would, please.

10 A. Okay. First of all, I can state that, no,
11 it's not an adjunct to the 12 CP method. It's an
12 independent analysis. The reason I provided it was
13 to provide what I think is a pretty good check on
14 the results of both the 12 CP method and the 1 CP
15 method.

16 It is -- to the extent you're interested
17 in going back to the manual, the loss of load is
18 included in the NARUC Manual, the loss of load
19 probability method is included in the NARUC Manual.
20 It's one of the energy-weighting methods -- or, no,
21 I'm sorry, I misspoke there. It's one of the
22 methods included in the production section of the
23 NARUC Manual.

24 In my opinion, it does a better job of
25 identifying responsibility by period for pure

1 capacity cost than energy cost for reasons I've
2 explained in my testimony, but I think it's a
3 little bit more sophisticated than simple methods
4 that look just at loads. It also is more data
5 intense obviously.

6 Q. But you just applied it to sort of
7 double-check the two methods?

8 A. Correct.

9 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: That's all I have at
10 this point.

11 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. At this time
12 we'll turn to the Commission and begin with
13 Commissioner Fedorchak.

14 **EXAMINATION**

15 **BY COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK:**

16 Q. Scott, I'm going to dumb this way down, so
17 if we can go back to the whole point of the cost
18 allocation factor, we want to fairly assign costs
19 to the customers that are contributing to them; is
20 that correct? That's what we're trying to do with
21 this?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. So why do we analyze peaks? Just explain
24 that like in simple terms, why does looking at the
25 peak and how the company prepares for the peak help

1 us appropriately assign costs?

2 A. Okay. Putting aside what peaks you're
3 going to look at, in general --

4 Q. Right.

5 A. -- the reason why you want to look at
6 peaks is when a company plans its system, whether
7 it be a collective system like generation and
8 transmission or localized system like distribution,
9 it needs to have sufficient capacity so that the
10 lights will go on no matter what time of the year
11 we're talking about. And generally you look at
12 peaks because you figure, well, if I can meet those
13 loads, I can meet all the other loads that are less
14 so that becomes one of your important planning
15 criterion.

16 Q. Okay. So then if you're trying to
17 allocate -- fairly allocate the costs, you should
18 be looking at the peak in the area that you're
19 allocating cost to so you should be looking at
20 North Dakota's peak?

21 A. Well, you should be looking at North
22 Dakota's contribution to the NSP system peak, in my
23 opinion. Because we plan our system on a
24 consolidated basis -- this goes back to the
25 questions I was asked earlier -- particularly with

1 production, we're dispatching a joint system and so
2 it could be that if you looked at the sum of the
3 three peaks for North Dakota, South Dakota, and
4 Minnesota, maybe it's 9,000 megawatts, and the NSP
5 system peak is 7,500 megawatts, you're going to
6 plan it for the 7,500 because you have some
7 diversity you can take advantage of. Does that
8 make sense?

9 Q. Mm-hmm. Is North Dakota's peak at a
10 different time?

11 A. I would have to go back and look at the
12 data. Generally North Dakota now -- I don't think
13 that was always the case, but it now peaks in the
14 summer. I don't -- I didn't go back and check to
15 see whether the hourly peak for North Dakota was
16 coincident with the NSP-Minnesota hourly
17 coincident --

18 JUDGE FETCH: Could you please speak up,
19 Mr. Brockett.

20 THE WITNESS: I'm sorry.

21 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you.

22 Q. (COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK CONTINUING) And
23 what are the big drivers of the peak in North
24 Dakota, some of the classes of them or some of the
25 customers? Like can you give me some real tangible

1 examples?

2 A. Well, the -- when you look at the North
3 Dakota peak load, you're looking at the combined
4 load of all the customers at that particular period
5 when the North Dakota load is the highest. If
6 you're asking which customers might be more likely
7 to contribute to that hourly peak load, I suggest
8 you might want to direct that question at Mr. Huso
9 or Mr. Peppin.

10 Q. All right. I notice in some of the
11 testimony that there are different investments
12 being made in certain regions in North Dakota, say
13 Minot, to deal with peak there. How does that --
14 those kinds of things, how are they better captured
15 in the 12 CP versus the 1 CP?

16 A. Okay. Now we're talking about
17 transmission specifically with the example you've
18 provided, and in that case the idea is that
19 transmission facilities are going to be built --
20 are going to be sized, rather, to meet the load
21 downstream from them.

22 Q. Mm-hmm.

23 A. And so that -- the time at which that kind
24 of microsystem peaks may not be our system
25 coincident peak. In fact, it's very likely that it

1 won't be, because you could have a very hot period
2 in Minneapolis that's driving the system peak, but
3 in North Dakota it might be a lot cooler, for
4 example, and you'll see your system peak served by
5 that transmission system occur at a different time.

6 The 12 CP method, what it does is it
7 allows you to take the kind of loads in not only
8 one month or two months, but all 12 months of the
9 year to recognize that all those loads can drive
10 system peaks. In fact, some of the loads may peak
11 in the winter.

12 Q. Mm-hmm. All right. You talk on page 4
13 and 5 on your rebuttal testimony about stability
14 and say that the 12 -- the 1 CP method would lead
15 to significant -- could lead to significant swings
16 and results because you're just looking at the one
17 peak; right? Just explain this whole issue of
18 stability a little bit more and why the 12 CP is
19 better at creating more stability than the 1,
20 because I don't see what is going on in North
21 Dakota that would change wildly one year to the
22 next that would change that peak.

23 A. Sure. I look at it as a matter of basic
24 statistics and probabilities. The more data points
25 you have, the more likely the need of that sample

1 is going to be -- or the population, rather, is
2 going to be similar or experience less of a
3 variation from year to year than if you just have
4 one data point. So I think just from a pure
5 statistical mathematical basis, it's always better
6 in terms of stability to be working with more data
7 points.

8 The other concern I have, I mention in my
9 testimony, is when you look at one single hour in a
10 historical year, that could be influenced quite
11 heavily by what I call anomalous circumstances,
12 like a large customer being down for maintenance.
13 We had that in Michigan. I don't know if that's a
14 case in North Dakota so much. But a large customer
15 being down for maintenance or having a very cool or
16 a very hot summer, and so that's why, when you look
17 at one historical hour, you might see a lot of this
18 noise or anomalies being captured and then the next
19 year you might have a completely different set of
20 circumstances and you're going to see quite a bit
21 of variation not only in the NSP system peak, but
22 perhaps in the North Dakota peak, and as a result
23 the percentage of cost allocated in North Dakota
24 based on the 1 CP method is going to exhibit
25 greater swings from year to year than if you had

1 the 12 data points. And that's why in the last
2 page of my exhibit I show on a historical basis
3 that that in fact has been true.

4 Q. So if you can give us the reasons again
5 why 1 CP is not appropriate, and if you can give
6 some like specific examples, not theory, why is
7 1 -- what's the problem with 1 CP? Why doesn't it
8 work?

9 A. 1 CP doesn't work because it doesn't
10 fairly recognize the drivers of our system cost.

11 Q. Why? What drivers?

12 A. Let's take a baseload plant, for example,
13 like Sherco 3 or a nuclear unit. If we had a --
14 I'll just throw out something. If we had a 500-
15 megawatt nuclear unit, we didn't incur all that
16 cost and go through all that process of siting and
17 licensing a nuclear unit so we could get an
18 additional 500 megawatts of capacity solely. We
19 did it because not only do we get that capacity,
20 but we would also get very cheap energy over the
21 course of a year. So it wasn't like we were
22 looking at what we thought our one-hour peak load
23 would be and saying, okay, we need a nuclear unit
24 to meet that load. It doesn't work that way. Your
25 system planning is more sophisticated. It takes

1 into account loads other than your peak coincident
2 hour. And that's the point I was trying to make
3 mainly in my testimony.

4 And then my second point was even if you
5 did assume that these costs were driven solely by
6 reliability or capacity needs, you needed the 500
7 megawatts, I still don't think looking at one peak
8 hour is appropriate for all the reasons I've said
9 because I don't think you can predict from year to
10 year when that peak hour is going to occur.
11 Moreover, you've got all sorts of considerations
12 like forced outages and planned maintenance,
13 diversity exchanges and things that really affect
14 as well as peak loads what your reserve margin is
15 going to be. So I don't think it captures cost
16 causality very accurately.

17 The second point -- I think this is
18 critical, we haven't talked about this -- is the
19 consistency. You know, in my mind, with the
20 regulatory compact if a utility has incurred a
21 prudently incurred cost, it should recover 100
22 percent of that cost unless there are very, very
23 special circumstances. And when you have different
24 allocation methods approved by different
25 jurisdictions, that doesn't happen, and most likely

1 a jurisdiction is going to approve an allocation
2 factor that lowers the cost to its jurisdiction and
3 then the shareholders are what's holding -- or
4 bearing some of that cost. So I think that's a
5 huge problem.

6 And then the third thing is the stability
7 that we just talked about. I think as a utility
8 employee, and also, I think, as the Commission,
9 it's in the public interest to have an allocator
10 that's going to be reasonably stable over time.
11 You don't want to see large swings that don't
12 necessarily reflect cost causality very well.

13 So those are the basic reasons that I
14 don't think a 1 CP method is warranted in this
15 case.

16 Q. Okay. So my last question was going to
17 be, and you touched on this, but what are the risks
18 of having an allocation method different in North
19 Dakota to Minnesota and South Dakota?

20 A. The risk to those jurisdictions, in my
21 opinion, is very minimal in terms of the cost to
22 customers, because Minnesota can say, Hey, well,
23 we'll just keep with the 12 CP method, our
24 customers get X dollars, but if the company's total
25 costs are a thousand dollars and you add up all the

1 recovery from the jurisdictions and it's 900, sure,
2 none of the jurisdictions are necessarily hurt, but
3 our shareholders are on the hook for a hundred
4 dollars of costs that were prudently incurred.
5 There's no collection of those costs.

6 Q. And why will having the different method,
7 like a 1 CP versus 12, result in that? Where does
8 the hundred dollars get lost, if you can give me
9 like a tangible example of how that would happen?

10 A. Sure. Yeah. Okay. So if you have a
11 thousand dollars of costs and you're trying to
12 collect it from three jurisdictions, let's just say
13 to make things simple, and one commission says,
14 well, gosh, I'm going to use the 1 CP method and
15 that gives me \$200, another commission says, well,
16 I'm going to use a 4 CP method, that gives me \$500,
17 and the third commission says, I'm going to use a
18 12 CP method and that gives my jurisdiction \$200,
19 the utility only gets to collect in total \$900
20 because, remember, those percentages will only sum
21 to one if consistent allocation methods are used,
22 that's just a matter of math, if you use a
23 different allocation method.

24 Q. Yeah, I'd have to just accept that as fact
25 because I -- why? I mean, all these allocation

1 methods are coming on at different times?

2 A. Let me try another way.

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. Let's suppose -- let's just take North
5 Dakota, for example. Let's suppose one allocation
6 method gave North Dakota one-third of the cost and
7 by coincidence NSP in the Minnesota jurisdiction
8 and the South Dakota jurisdiction also picked up
9 one-third of the cost using that specific
10 allocation method. Now, let's assume NSP's North
11 Dakota and Minnesota commissions keep the same
12 approach, so they're still collecting two-thirds of
13 the cost, and the North Dakota Commission says,
14 hey, I'm going to change to another method that
15 only gives us one-sixth of the cost. At the end of
16 the day we're only collecting five-sixths of our
17 cost in total because we're still collecting the
18 same amounts from Minnesota and South Dakota,
19 they're not changing, but North Dakota said, hey,
20 we're going to go to a method that gives us less
21 cost. So mathematically I will guarantee you that,
22 yeah, you're not going to collect your total cost.

23 Q. So there's no way for you guys to collect
24 your total costs unless all the states are doing
25 the same method?

1 A. Yeah, unless the methods are consistent.
2 There might be some small slippage in terms of
3 timing, I understand that, but unless all the
4 states have a consistent method, then it's very
5 difficult for a utility to collect a hundred
6 percent of its cost, yeah.

7 Q. Is there any way you can explain that to
8 me, why the 1 CP would leave some of the costs
9 stranded versus the 12 CP?

10 A. Well, remember where we're starting from.
11 We're starting from a place where all the states
12 have adopted the 12 CP method. Let's suppose it's
13 just that one-third, one-third, one-third I was
14 talking about then that's the result of that 12 CP
15 method. Now all of a sudden in the back let's say
16 North Dakota says, hey, I want to go to another
17 method that gives us one-sixth of the cost. Well,
18 that's not being filtered through Minnesota and
19 South Dakota. That's just the reduction in the
20 cost responsibility to North Dakota so then you go
21 back to the math and you get five-sixths of your
22 costs instead of all of them.

23 Q. I get all that. I'm just struggling with
24 what about the method leaves certain things out.
25 You know, what is it about the 1 CP method that

1 results in less than the 12 CP? You know what I'm
2 saying?

3 A. It's not any one specific method that
4 results in that. It's the inconsistencies between
5 the methods. If in fact -- let's suppose we used
6 the 4 CP method in all three states and North
7 Dakota went to a 12 CP method, you could have the
8 same results. It's the inconsistency that leads to
9 the shortage. That's why the starting point is so
10 important to consider.

11 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Okay. All right.
12 I think that's all for me. Thank you.

13 JUDGE FETCH: All right. Thank you.
14 We'll go to Commissioner Kalk.

15 COMMISSIONER KALK: Thank you, Your Honor.

16 **EXAMINATION**

17 **BY COMMISSIONER KALK:**

18 Q. Scott, you do this for a living all the
19 time? Good for you. All right. We need good
20 people. Whatever that compensation discussion we
21 were having before, I think you've made your case
22 on that.

23 Anyway, to kind of elaborate what
24 Commissioner Fedorchak was saying, that if -- let's
25 just say North Dakota -- we went with 1 CP -- and I

1 get the argument the different cost allocations --
2 could you then go back to those other jurisdictions
3 and say, listen, North Dakota changed their formula
4 so we're going to ask you to pick up more of the
5 cost?

6 A. It's a possibility, but then if I'm the
7 Minnesota Commission --

8 Q. Oh, I understand that, but --

9 A. You're talking theoretically?

10 Q. Yeah. If we approve two bucks and you go
11 back to the other commissions and say, listen,
12 North Dakota has got a different state policy.
13 We're going to ask you to pay more. Similar to
14 their renewable policy and we end up having to pay
15 more, how would this be any different?

16 A. I see one difference with cost
17 allocation --

18 Q. Fair enough.

19 A. -- with renewable policy. I understand
20 the analogy you're drawing.

21 Q. The best I could come up with.

22 A. What's that?

23 Q. It's the best I could come up with because
24 it's different state visions.

25 A. No, it's a pretty good one, but here's the

1 difference, I think. In the case of the
2 allocations the risk you run is that the utility is
3 not going to be able to recover a hundred percent
4 of its prudently incurred cost. If you take the
5 case of renewables and the State of North Dakota
6 says, hey, you know, we don't like this stuff for
7 whatever reason.

8 Q. We like it, just not as much.

9 A. Not as much. And I don't mean to be
10 facetious.

11 Q. Sure.

12 A. I'm just saying if you think the cost is
13 imprudently incurred, you say, hey, I'm going to
14 take that million dollars out of the revenue
15 requirement. Yeah, we don't recover our cost, but
16 there's a good, solid basis for it.

17 Q. Fair enough.

18 A. The Commission says we don't like that
19 cost.

20 Q. Back to your point -- and I really
21 appreciate you digging out the Commission order
22 PU-400-92. I think talking to my esteemed staff
23 out there that was here back in those days,
24 Commissioner Wefald, Reinbold and Bruce Hagen, it
25 was Commissioner Wefald's first big decision, if

1 you will, when she got here, and sent it back to a
2 12 CP. And so I think -- and you can give me your
3 thoughts on my comments -- back when it was a
4 system in North Dakota where you had your own
5 generation, your own transmission, the state peaked
6 pretty much the same time, 1 CP was the best way to
7 do things. When we switched to a multi-
8 jurisdictional, regional transmission MISO
9 organization where we're all bidding in and bidding
10 out, the 12 CP has emerged as the policy that has
11 to be followed. I mean, I guess you would agree
12 with that because that's been your whole point of
13 all of this.

14 A. I would agree, yeah, with the developments
15 in our system over the years that the 12 CP method
16 makes sense, yes.

17 Q. But perhaps the biggest driver -- let me
18 rephrase this. How much do you think the
19 integration of regional transmission organizations
20 such as MISO have driven the use of 12 CP?

21 A. Nationally or --

22 Q. Well, for our case regionally, but
23 nationally too, because I suspect other commissions
24 have the same challenges with RTOs, that you're
25 going to pay more for a state like North Dakota on

1 the western edge of an RTO, you're not going to see
2 the benefits of it, but you're going to have to
3 follow those rules to play in those larger
4 transmission groups.

5 A. That's a good question. You know, it's
6 had an impact, but I can't accurately give you an
7 idea of the extent of it or the magnitude of it
8 because I think even before we went to RTO world,
9 that there was a -- I wouldn't call it a rebuttable
10 presumption, by any means, but I think there was a
11 trend towards using 12 CP even before MISO existed
12 or PJM existed or any of the other RTOs we know
13 today.

14 Q. Okay. You had something in your -- I
15 don't know exactly what the testimony today --
16 we'll call it your summary, the 12 CP method also
17 better captures the drivers of our fixed
18 transmission costs. Can you explain that a little
19 bit?

20 A. Sure. What I meant mainly is that when
21 you go from production to transmission, I think you
22 change your view of the cost drivers a little bit
23 and that we don't necessarily dispatch a
24 transmission system on a consolidated basis.
25 Different segments of the transmission system --

1 well, let me back up.

2 There are some obviously backbone
3 components of the transmission system that serve a
4 very wide area. There's no denying that. But a
5 large percentage of our transmission plant is sized
6 to serve what I will call, for lack of a better
7 term, radial load downstream from it. And when you
8 look at when those different areas may peak, it's
9 most likely not going to be at our system peak --
10 system hourly peak, and that's what I was trying to
11 explain before, perhaps awkwardly, that, you
12 know --

13 Q. I'm tracking there.

14 A. -- it's better to look at the peak loads
15 in all months because it's probably a better proxy
16 what's really driving an aggregate are different
17 transmission investments.

18 Q. And that's what's driving our transmission
19 investments to meet those differing peaks?

20 A. Correct.

21 Q. Depending on whether it would be the 12 CP
22 or the 1 CP, would that change the philosophy
23 behind your transmission tariff you're requesting
24 in this rate case, or is that completely apples and
25 oranges in the tariff?

1 other two so that it is the same across all the
2 jurisdictions within the unit?

3 A. That's a hypothetical I haven't considered
4 or confronted. What I can tell you in that
5 situation, I would say, absolutely, that using the
6 1 CP method in that case would better promote the
7 goal of consistency. I don't think it would better
8 promote the goal of cost causality, then you would
9 have to balance those goals and reach a judgment.

10 Q. You mentioned, and I'm paraphrasing, that
11 inconsistency in methods leads to shortages for the
12 company. To me that would assume that the
13 jurisdictions will always pick the method that
14 provides the lowest rates for their people or else
15 it could just as easily end up with excess returns
16 for the company; correct?

17 A. Yeah. My presumption is perhaps cynical,
18 but I think under an expected value basis -- well,
19 let me put it this way. There might be cases where
20 a commission would adopt an allocation method that
21 would assign more costs -- allocate more costs to
22 that jurisdiction. My experience over time is you
23 would expect the opposite to occur as a general
24 matter.

25 Q. Okay. Since I wouldn't know how to do it,

1 but I'm assuming you would know how to predict
2 this, what are the characteristics within these
3 three jurisdictions that would make a 12 CP method
4 beneficial over a 1 CP or vice versa? I'm assuming
5 that we're having this discussion because if you
6 disregarded any of the concerns of the company, I'm
7 assuming that a 1 CP method must be better for
8 North Dakota members.

9 A. Yeah, it is.

10 Q. What characteristics lead us to that
11 conclusion?

12 A. Which conclusion is that, Commissioner?

13 Q. That a 1 CP method would be beneficial to
14 North Dakota consumers.

15 A. Oh, well, if you actually apply the 1 CP
16 method to the 2013 test year, for example, or to
17 the 2010 to 2012 historical period that Dr.
18 Pavlovic chose, in either case you're going to get
19 a smaller percentage allocation to the North Dakota
20 jurisdiction using the 1 CP method than the 12 CP
21 method, so it's largely an empirical matter.

22 Q. But does that happen where our high
23 temperatures in the summer are not as extreme or
24 more extreme compared to the rest of our usage
25 throughout the year? I'm trying to figure out what

1 characteristics cause this difference between the
2 jurisdictions.

3 A. Well, all I can tell you is that if you
4 look at the monthly peaks for North Dakota, they
5 tend to be in a little bit narrower range over the
6 course of the year than the monthly peaks for the
7 system. I don't know whether I can say the load
8 factor is materially higher in North Dakota than in
9 Minnesota or South Dakota. I haven't run that
10 analysis. So that's all I can really tell you.

11 Q. Are you familiar with South Dakota's
12 numbers? Are they more similar to North Dakota or
13 more similar to Minnesota?

14 A. I'm not familiar with South Dakota's
15 numbers, no.

16 Q. Now, just regarding the consistency
17 between the jurisdictions, and this is along the
18 same lines as Commissioner Kalk's question, but --
19 I do get the point that it's nice for the company
20 and it does make some sense to have the same rules
21 within each jurisdiction. Do you personally -- or
22 did the company object just as strenuously to
23 renewable energy mandates in Minnesota which --
24 through the jurisdictions and the completely
25 different set of guidelines as well?

1 A. That's difficult for me to characterize.
2 I'm not based in Minnesota or haven't been since
3 1998, and there have been a series of different
4 renewable requirements over the course of the years
5 and the companies either acceded or objected to
6 them with various degrees of vigor, I guess.

7 JUDGE FETCH: They can't hear you back
8 here at all. Could you please speak up.

9 THE WITNESS: Okay. I'm sorry.

10 JUDGE FETCH: Is that on?

11 THE WITNESS: It is, yes. Can you hear me
12 now?

13 JUDGE FETCH: Is that better? Thank you.

14 THE WITNESS: I apologize for that. I
15 don't know where I was.

16 JUDGE FETCH: You haven't lived in
17 Minnesota since 1998 and you're not familiar with
18 the renewables.

19 THE WITNESS: Oh, yeah. And so --

20 JUDGE FETCH: Judges hear everything.

21 THE WITNESS: What?

22 JUDGE FETCH: Judges hear and remember
23 everything.

24 THE WITNESS: Thank you. I appreciate
25 that -- that reminder.

1 So I can't really say -- you know, I don't
2 want to paint with too broad a brush how adamant
3 the company has been either in supporting or
4 opposing some of these renewable mandates or
5 encouragements, if you will.

6 But I will go back to the discussion that
7 I had with Chair Kalk, and that is, I do think
8 there is a difference to be drawn -- or distinction
9 to be drawn, rather, between the costs of renewable
10 mandates and the costs allocated among
11 jurisdictions, because at least -- you know, with
12 the renewable mandates or any other costs that a
13 commission has concerns about, it can explicitly
14 disallow that cost if it wants. I'm not saying it
15 should, but if it wants, it has that right under
16 the regulatory compact. In my mind, shorting a
17 utility for prudently incurred costs due to the
18 mechanics of specific cost allocations can be
19 construed as inconsistent with the regulatory
20 compact and that's the difference I would draw.

21 Q. (COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN CONTINUING) Are
22 there any jurisdictions that you're familiar with
23 that do something to blend methods like this
24 where -- you know, maybe you'd figure it out -- and
25 then just throwing out an example, not a

1 suggestion, but like maybe you'd figure it out
2 under a 1 CP formula and a 12 CP formula and then
3 split the difference or use a couple parts of one
4 and one of the other, something like that that
5 blends it out? I know it wouldn't solve the
6 problems as far as inconsistency between
7 jurisdictions, but is there a medium ground between
8 these two alternatives?

9 A. I think Dr. Pavlovic in his supplemental
10 testimony mentioned that the number of potential
11 allocation methods is only bounded by the ingenuity
12 or the imagination of the practitioner, but -- I'm
13 not quoting him directly. I would kind of agree to
14 that conceptually or theoretically. There's all
15 sorts of different approaches that you can develop
16 to allocate costs, there's no question about it,
17 but you have to come back to the fundamental
18 question, just because you average two methods
19 doesn't mean that that result is better.

20 Q. But my question was or it was meant to be,
21 are there examples that you're familiar with where
22 it is something in between, some kind of a blend
23 like that, that are being used right now?

24 A. I apologize. I'm sorry. No, I'm not
25 aware of any methods like that where you average

1 12 CP and 1 CP or 4 CP and 1 CP. I'm sure there
2 are some. I just don't know of them.

3 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Thank you. I
4 have no more questions, Judge.

5 JUDGE FETCH: Commissioner. Mr. Johnson,
6 any redirect?

7 MR. JOHNSON: Just a couple of areas, Your
8 Honor.

9 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you.

10 **REDIRECT EXAMINATION**

11 **BY MR. JOHNSON:**

12 Q. Mr. Brockett, you had -- you made a
13 reference to your Schedule 2 as being a document
14 that explains the varying levels of stability or
15 instability of the 1 CP and the 12 CP. Could you
16 kind of walk us through that in brief and tell us
17 which of these line items one would look at to see
18 that?

19 A. Yes. The specific page is page 5 of 5 of
20 Schedule 2, and I show data before transmission
21 loss multiplier and after, but for this -- for my
22 response I'll just concentrate on the after
23 transmission loss multipliers. And if you look on
24 line 35, I provide the simple average of the North
25 Dakota percentage of cost using the different

1 methods from 2007 through 2013. So, for example,
2 4.69 percent is the average percentage of cost
3 North Dakota would bear under the 1 CP method and,
4 likewise, the North Dakota jurisdiction would bear
5 5.73 percent of the cost under the 12 CP method on
6 average and 5.78 percent of the cost under the loss
7 of load probability method.

8 I then -- on line 37 I tried to indicate
9 what the range of the values is from 2007 through
10 2013, and so that range is the high minus the low,
11 so, for example, the 1.65 percent means that the
12 range of the values of the percentage of cost
13 allocated in North Dakota under the 1 CP method
14 varies by 1.65 percentage points. And I've done
15 the same analysis for the 12 CP method and then the
16 loss of load probability method.

17 I have two other metrics here that I'll
18 just mention briefly. I take the maximum value
19 under each method as a percentage above the average
20 and I take the minimum value as a percentage below
21 average, and I just do that to show again what
22 the -- another measure of what the range of
23 stability of these results is over time.

24 Q. Looking at those three lines, 37, 39, and
25 42, it appears that in each case the range of

1 variability is substantially greater under the 1 CP
2 than the 12?

3 A. That's correct.

4 Q. Now, if I were wanting to say what a
5 potential effect would be on a rate case -- you
6 know, you could file a rate case in any particular
7 year -- which of these lines would it be -- I mean,
8 would it be the sort of line 39 as the most
9 indicative of what kind of a range you could get on
10 a revenue requirement?

11 A. I would say line 37 probably gives you the
12 best indication. You could say, well, gosh,
13 depending on what year -- what test year I'm
14 talking about, the percentage allocated to my state
15 might vary by 1.65 percent -- percentage points --
16 not percent, but percentage points -- so I don't
17 know how much that means in terms of revenue but
18 it's quite a bit.

19 Q. As compared to the .44 percent for the
20 12 CP?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. A couple of clarifying points. You
23 referred to the NSP system. Do you recall that?
24 You had several questions on that.

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And does that include -- which states are
2 included in that?

3 A. I was referring to Minnesota, North
4 Dakota, and South Dakota.

5 Q. Is the -- the system that serves
6 Minnesota, North and South Dakota, does it also
7 serve Wisconsin?

8 A. Yes, and there's an interchange agreement
9 to allocate the cost.

10 Q. And how about a portion of Michigan also?

11 A. Yes, a little bit of the UP.

12 Q. Is it fair then to conclude that the NSP
13 system serves portions of five states, all of
14 three -- I guess all of four and part of five --
15 part of a fifth? I guess it's not all of any of
16 them, is it? It's just your --

17 A. No, it sure isn't. It's part of five
18 states, yeah.

19 Q. Thank you. Now, you had earlier questions
20 regarding the significance of the fact that since
21 you don't know the exact date when a peak is going
22 to occur, it has an effect on your planning. Can
23 you amplify that a little bit for me? That wasn't
24 clear to me.

25 A. Well, my point was simply you don't know

1 when your peak load is going to occur. It could
2 occur in many different hours during the year. And
3 you also don't know when you're going to incur
4 forced outages and you don't know when -- there
5 could be other contingencies that you haven't
6 planned for. The point being is that you have to
7 plan your system so that you can meet your loads
8 reliably in all hours of the year, not just what
9 was one peak hour in historical year.

10 MR. JOHNSON: That's all the questions I
11 have. Thank you, Your Honor.

12 JUDGE FETCH: You're welcome. Mr.
13 Norrell, any further questions?

14 MR. NORRELL: Yes, Your Honor, just a
15 couple.

16 **REXCROSS-EXAMINATION**

17 **BY MR. NORRELL:**

18 Q. Mr. Brockett, are you aware of any
19 utilities that are located in multiple
20 jurisdictions but use different methods -- cost
21 allocation methods in those different
22 jurisdictions?

23 A. I haven't researched that so I don't know
24 if there are any.

25 Q. Do you know if there are any jurisdictions

1 where public utilities -- or utilities -- I
2 apologize -- that use 1 CP as an allocation method?

3 A. Well, yes. I know Otter Tail uses the
4 1 CP method. I'm sure there's others as well.

5 MR. NORRELL: Thank you. No further
6 questions, Your Honor.

7 JUDGE FETCH: All right. Thank you. Ms.
8 Jeffcoat-Sacco, any questions?

9 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: Yes.

10 **RE-CROSS-EXAMINATION**

11 **BY MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO:**

12 Q. You touched on this, but I don't think I
13 got the answer -- I mean, I wasn't hearing the
14 answer to the question that was in my head. What's
15 the magic of 12 as opposed to 4 or 6 or some other
16 number of coincident peaks?

17 A. There's no magic or specific algorithm
18 that spits out specific numbers of months. I think
19 the reason why people gravitated towards these
20 different number of months is they either want to
21 look at peak hour during the year or they want to
22 look at a specific season, which suggests the use
23 of 3 CP or 4 CP, or they think loads in all months
24 are important, which means you use the 12 CP.

25 Now, in the NARUC Manual there's also

1 another method where you just look at summer and
2 winter loads, more the shorter seasons. That's
3 another permutation, I guess.

4 Q. We talked a lot about a utility not
5 recovering a hundred percent of its costs if the
6 jurisdictional allocation didn't add up to one, but
7 it's also theoretically possible that it could add
8 up to more than one; correct?

9 A. Theoretical, yeah.

10 Q. On your Schedule 2, which I've spent more
11 time looking at now than I really cared to, and
12 this just kind of came to Pat and I here in the
13 last few minutes, but the projected -- a projected
14 winter peak again for the North Dakota NSP system
15 whereas the last several years have been summer
16 peaking -- used to be winter peaking, then we have,
17 I think, '10, '11, and '12 as summer peaking, but
18 your 2013 projected is winter peaking again, which
19 kind of surprised us. So why?

20 A. That question would probably be best
21 directed to another company witness. I did not
22 prepare or develop those monthly peak loads.

23 Q. Do you know which witness? Is it one that
24 has not appeared yet?

25 A. I think it would probably be Ms. Heuer.

1 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: That's all we have.
2 Thank you.

3 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. Commissioners,
4 any further questions?

5 COMMISSIONER KALK: I have one, Your
6 Honor.

7 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: I do too.

8 JUDGE FETCH: All right. We'll begin with
9 Commissioner Fedorchak and we've got two minutes.

10 **FURTHER EXAMINATION**

11 **BY COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK:**

12 Q. Okay. So can you recover a hundred
13 percent of your prudently incurred costs with the
14 1 CP method?

15 A. If all three -- or all jurisdictions used
16 that method, yes, you could.

17 Q. But, otherwise, you will not be able to?

18 A. Anytime there's a difference in the
19 allocation methods, you're either going to recover
20 less or more than a hundred percent of your cost,
21 and my belief is at an average it will be less.

22 Q. Okay. And then you were just talking with
23 Mr. Johnson about the not knowing when the peak is
24 going to be, but in this -- when we're considering
25 preparing for peak, does it matter as much when as

1 just being prepared for the magnitude of the peak?
2 If you're prepared for the magnitude, does it
3 matter so much when it happens?

4 A. It can matter because when you plan, you
5 have to look not only at the demand side of the
6 equation but also the supply side, and so you have
7 to look at your assumed forced outage rates and
8 your planned maintenance and your diversity
9 exchanges.

10 And I think -- and I'll take a simple
11 example and I'm not sure this even holds for our
12 system. But, you know, if you have an increase in
13 January peak loads, for example, under some
14 conditions maybe you have to back off a diversity
15 exchange with Manitoba Hydro. That means you have
16 less in the summer, and so that increase in the
17 January load actually caused an increase in the
18 amount of capacity you have to install.

19 And that's why I say things get pretty
20 complicated, which is why I like to look at the
21 LOLP, but I think if you just simply look at one
22 hour of peak load and say, hey, that's what we're
23 going to plan for, I think there's some danger in
24 that.

25 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Thank you, Scott.

1 THE WITNESS: You're welcome.

2 JUDGE FETCH: Commissioner Kalk.

3 COMMISSIONER KALK: Thirty seconds, right,
4 Your Honor?

5 JUDGE FETCH: Yes, sir.

6 **FURTHER EXAMINATION**

7 **BY COMMISSIONER KALK:**

8 Q. Did you just tell Illona that you think
9 Otter Tail is a 1 CP, or are you sure Otter Tail is
10 a 1 CP?

11 A. The most recent order I read for North
12 Dakota suggested Otter Tail used -- or the
13 Commission approved a 1 CP method for Otter Tail in
14 its last rate case.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. That's just for North Dakota.

17 Q. Right. That was a question that I've got
18 staff already working on for tomorrow.

19 Do you have any reason why you would think
20 that the Commission may have approved the 1 CP for
21 Otter Tail -- how that would be a different
22 scenario than for your case? My thought right
23 away, they're a winter peaker. You're just trying
24 to make the argument you're a winter peaker now.

25 A. Well, I don't know. Part of the issue

1 with looking back at that North Dakota case is I
2 couldn't find any discussion of the issue.

3 COMMISSIONER KALK: It may have been a
4 settlement agreement issue that never came to the
5 Commission. I think for today I just wanted to
6 make sure I understood what you told our attorneys.

7 JUDGE FETCH: I think staff will be
8 working a little longer tonight.

9 All right. Commissioner Christmann.

10 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Well, we're out
11 of time, Your Honor, but that's okay because I
12 don't have any more questions.

13 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you, sir. Anything
14 further?

15 MR. JOHNSON: No, Your Honor.

16 JUDGE FETCH: Anything further over here?

17 MR. NORRELL: No, Your Honor.

18 MS. JEFFCOAT-SACCO: No. Thank you.

19 JUDGE FETCH: Thank you. You're excused.

20 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

21 JUDGE FETCH: And I saw some looks of
22 shock on the other side of the room. I think
23 they'll be doing a little research tonight as well.

24 So it is 8:01 p.m., Central Time, on
25 August 27th, 2013. We will stand in recess and we

1 will reconvene tomorrow morning -- Commissioners,
2 what's your pleasure?

3 COMMISSIONER KALK: Don't we have nine
4 o'clock announced?

5 JUDGE FETCH: I'm not sure. Is nine
6 o'clock announced?

7 COMMISSIONER KALK: I'm okay with earlier,
8 but I suspect nine o'clock is what we go with.

9 JUDGE FETCH: Nine o'clock tomorrow
10 morning, August 28th, we will reconvene, and there
11 are five listed witnesses for the company. By my
12 calculations we should be done by noon with the
13 company's case. All right. Good night, everyone.

14 (Recessed at 8:02 p.m., August 27, 2013.)

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,	1,000 [1] - 159:24 1,139 [1] - 66:12 1,359 [1] - 66:19 1.65 [3] - 374:11, 374:14, 375:15 10 [30] - 12:9, 19:3, 34:18, 68:7, 69:23, 70:5, 70:19, 74:9, 78:3, 111:11, 111:13, 124:10, 124:11, 125:4, 130:5, 131:1, 132:8, 145:14, 145:20, 152:2, 195:6, 222:12, 222:16, 245:3, 248:14, 282:8, 282:11, 295:16, 320:23 10-003 [3] - 12:8, 67:16, 165:23 10-K [2] - 11:11, 287:3 10-minute [1] - 264:12 10-year [7] - 133:23, 284:23, 285:7, 294:22, 295:15, 295:18, 295:19 10.25 [3] - 34:18, 40:16, 125:21 10.4 [4] - 75:7, 144:3, 144:5, 192:13 10.5 [1] - 34:18 10.7 [5] - 192:13, 192:16, 193:4, 193:6, 193:8 100 [12] - 3:7, 178:22, 178:23, 202:8, 211:24, 262:21, 272:8, 273:11, 273:19, 273:20, 296:9, 355:21 1064 [4] - 146:24, 147:4, 147:7, 152:25		
'	'08 [1] - 135:1 '10 [1] - 379:17 '11 [1] - 379:17 '12 [1] - 379:17 '70s [1] - 102:24 '81 [1] - 123:24 '86 [1] - 322:1 '87 [1] - 322:7 '92 [4] - 123:25, 322:1, 343:17, 344:20 '93 [2] - 343:16, 344:20		
0			
049	049 [1] - 327:24		
1			
1 [83] - 9:4, 11:18, 23:16,			

2	<p>163:17, 163:25, 164:6, 164:7, 165:12, 306:13, 316:3, 324:23, 368:16, 374:1, 374:10, 379:18, 383:25, 384:14</p> <p>2014 [11] - 99:5, 103:13, 103:15, 103:19, 104:4, 104:9, 104:13, 104:19, 165:15, 201:18</p> <p>2015 [1] - 46:19</p> <p>2016 [3] - 46:19, 46:22, 59:21</p> <p>2018 [3] - 106:14, 106:25, 107:7</p> <p>202 [1] - 3:19</p> <p>203 [1] - 3:20</p> <p>2030 [4] - 175:3, 197:18, 197:25, 199:7</p> <p>2030ish [1] - 197:16</p> <p>204 [1] - 3:20</p> <p>209 [2] - 4:3, 10:23</p> <p>21 [5] - 10:16, 12:24, 39:23, 328:12, 345:25</p> <p>213 [1] - 4:3</p> <p>22 [3] - 10:18, 12:25, 25:20</p> <p>23 [9] - 10:19, 39:16, 39:21, 45:2, 45:6, 68:4, 70:15, 222:3, 345:25</p> <p>23.9 [1] - 167:20</p> <p>230 [1] - 13:11</p> <p>231 [1] - 4:4</p> <p>24 [4] - 10:21, 155:24, 183:12, 328:13</p> <p>24-month [1] - 109:12</p> <p>247 [4] - 109:12, 109:18, 183:9, 191:10</p> <p>243 [1] - 4:4</p> <p>249 [1] - 4:5</p> <p>25 [46] - 9:5, 9:7, 9:9, 9:10, 9:11, 9:13, 9:14, 9:16, 9:17, 9:19, 9:20, 9:22, 9:23, 9:25, 10:3, 10:5, 10:6, 10:8, 10:9, 10:11, 10:12, 10:14, 10:15, 10:17, 10:18, 10:22, 66:11, 167:13, 173:7, 173:10, 181:8, 212:1, 235:12, 235:19, 245:23, 245:24, 246:2, 246:4, 246:11, 262:8, 262:17, 262:23, 263:4, 263:6, 263:13, 263:14</p> <p>256 [1] - 4:5</p> <p>257 [1] - 4:6</p> <p>26 [11] - 10:23, 11:19, 11:20, 11:22, 11:23, 11:25, 12:3, 12:5, 39:22, 209:7, 209:11</p> <p>261 [1] - 4:7</p> <p>262 [1] - 4:8</p> <p>265 [1] - 10:24</p> <p>266 [1] - 4:10</p>	<p>27 [5] - 1:18, 10:24, 15:3, 265:19, 384:14</p> <p>271 [1] - 4:10</p> <p>27th [3] - 15:5, 306:13, 383:25</p> <p>28 [4] - 1:18, 11:3, 171:19, 307:7</p> <p>28-32 [1] - 27:14</p> <p>282 [1] - 12:10</p> <p>288 [1] - 4:11</p> <p>28th [1] - 384:10</p> <p>29 [2] - 1:18, 11:4</p> <p>292 [1] - 4:11</p> <p>296 [1] - 4:12</p> <p>29th [2] - 16:3, 66:17</p> <p>2:44 [1] - 208:13</p>	<p>38 [1] - 11:16</p> <p>380 [1] - 4:20</p> <p>382 [1] - 4:21</p> <p>39 [3] - 3:5, 374:24, 375:8</p> <p>390 [1] - 5:3</p> <p>394 [2] - 5:3, 11:4</p> <p>3:00 [1] - 317:6</p>
<p>2 [33] - 9:6, 11:20, 23:19, 63:15, 63:23, 68:3, 152:4, 163:14, 164:3, 177:18, 177:21, 191:24, 229:21, 230:7, 230:10, 245:3, 247:17, 247:22, 274:1, 280:24, 297:2, 297:8, 297:9, 311:25, 323:12, 326:5, 326:16, 331:9, 332:2, 338:4, 373:13, 373:20, 379:10</p> <p>2,000 [1] - 329:13</p> <p>20 [23] - 10:15, 12:23, 39:23, 42:6, 46:9, 47:5, 81:3, 97:11, 102:15, 130:5, 131:1, 131:8, 133:18, 133:24, 133:25, 134:3, 178:10, 196:13, 198:5, 198:14, 248:14, 309:6</p> <p>20-year [5] - 131:13, 177:15, 177:18, 295:17, 295:20</p> <p>2000 [2] - 122:12, 322:17</p> <p>2005 [5] - 291:5, 300:24, 301:7, 331:10, 333:3</p> <p>2005-2012 [1] - 12:11</p> <p>2007 [5] - 32:9, 33:14, 123:25, 374:1, 374:9</p> <p>2008 [10] - 56:5, 56:10, 88:14, 88:15, 99:14, 119:23, 129:3, 129:20, 143:20, 143:23</p> <p>2009 [1] - 70:8</p> <p>2010 [10] - 35:18, 70:1, 70:9, 283:4, 293:15, 299:4, 301:3, 301:21, 368:17</p> <p>2011 [13] - 68:9, 68:10, 69:25, 70:1, 70:9, 157:18, 283:4, 286:4, 287:3, 296:23, 297:5, 299:3, 302:14</p> <p>2012 [21] - 13:14, 51:25, 52:1, 52:5, 61:1, 68:8, 70:1, 78:20, 111:15, 144:2, 144:3, 144:4, 144:7, 144:12, 144:14, 158:21, 163:25, 327:6, 328:2, 331:11, 368:17</p> <p>2013 [52] - 1:6, 1:18, 12:6, 13:16, 15:3, 15:5, 15:12, 15:15, 15:19, 15:21, 15:25, 16:3, 18:4, 35:4, 35:13, 35:16, 52:5, 66:4, 78:8, 78:16, 78:17, 78:18, 78:24, 78:25, 79:21, 80:12, 80:15, 80:23, 81:8, 81:12, 88:17, 88:19, 111:15, 129:6, 156:20, 157:7, 157:16,</p>	3	4	
<p>2 [33] - 9:6, 11:20, 23:19, 63:15, 63:23, 68:3, 152:4, 163:14, 164:3, 177:18, 177:21, 191:24, 229:21, 230:7, 230:10, 245:3, 247:17, 247:22, 274:1, 280:24, 297:2, 297:8, 297:9, 311:25, 323:12, 326:5, 326:16, 331:9, 332:2, 338:4, 373:13, 373:20, 379:10</p> <p>2,000 [1] - 329:13</p> <p>20 [23] - 10:15, 12:23, 39:23, 42:6, 46:9, 47:5, 81:3, 97:11, 102:15, 130:5, 131:1, 131:8, 133:18, 133:24, 133:25, 134:3, 178:10, 196:13, 198:5, 198:14, 248:14, 309:6</p> <p>20-year [5] - 131:13, 177:15, 177:18, 295:17, 295:20</p> <p>2000 [2] - 122:12, 322:17</p> <p>2005 [5] - 291:5, 300:24, 301:7, 331:10, 333:3</p> <p>2005-2012 [1] - 12:11</p> <p>2007 [5] - 32:9, 33:14, 123:25, 374:1, 374:9</p> <p>2008 [10] - 56:5, 56:10, 88:14, 88:15, 99:14, 119:23, 129:3, 129:20, 143:20, 143:23</p> <p>2009 [1] - 70:8</p> <p>2010 [10] - 35:18, 70:1, 70:9, 283:4, 293:15, 299:4, 301:3, 301:21, 368:17</p> <p>2011 [13] - 68:9, 68:10, 69:25, 70:1, 70:9, 157:18, 283:4, 286:4, 287:3, 296:23, 297:5, 299:3, 302:14</p> <p>2012 [21] - 13:14, 51:25, 52:1, 52:5, 61:1, 68:8, 70:1, 78:20, 111:15, 144:2, 144:3, 144:4, 144:7, 144:12, 144:14, 158:21, 163:25, 327:6, 328:2, 331:11, 368:17</p> <p>2013 [52] - 1:6, 1:18, 12:6, 13:16, 15:3, 15:5, 15:12, 15:15, 15:19, 15:21, 15:25, 16:3, 18:4, 35:4, 35:13, 35:16, 52:5, 66:4, 78:8, 78:16, 78:17, 78:18, 78:24, 78:25, 79:21, 80:12, 80:15, 80:23, 81:8, 81:12, 88:17, 88:19, 111:15, 129:6, 156:20, 157:7, 157:16,</p>	<p>3 [25] - 9:8, 11:21, 23:22, 60:24, 61:21, 63:23, 68:4, 157:15, 157:21, 157:25, 230:10, 231:3, 244:8, 247:22, 268:8, 269:1, 296:25, 297:10, 318:5, 327:18, 333:22, 333:24, 354:13, 378:23</p> <p>3,300 [1] - 327:19</p> <p>30 [20] - 11:5, 11:12, 12:19, 57:3, 57:10, 105:16, 109:14, 110:1, 120:20, 121:24, 123:20, 131:1, 131:8, 133:18, 133:24, 166:1, 169:12, 179:15, 262:17, 263:8</p> <p>304 [1] - 4:12</p> <p>307 [2] - 4:14, 11:3</p> <p>30th [1] - 15:19</p> <p>31 [1] - 11:7</p> <p>312 [1] - 4:15</p> <p>31st [3] - 283:4, 296:23, 297:5</p> <p>32 [2] - 11:8, 267:11</p> <p>33 [2] - 11:10, 66:5</p> <p>332 [1] - 12:11</p> <p>337 [1] - 4:16</p> <p>34 [2] - 11:11, 328:3</p> <p>345 [1] - 58:12</p> <p>348 [1] - 4:16</p> <p>35 [2] - 11:12, 373:24</p> <p>36 [2] - 11:14, 161:14</p> <p>36-month [1] - 322:18</p> <p>360 [1] - 4:17</p> <p>366 [1] - 4:17</p> <p>37 [4] - 11:15, 374:8, 374:24, 375:11</p> <p>373 [1] - 4:18</p> <p>377 [1] - 4:18</p> <p>378 [1] - 4:19</p>	<p>4 [20] - 9:10, 11:23, 24:1, 224:25, 271:22, 272:18, 272:19, 272:20, 273:2, 304:7, 304:16, 320:19, 321:4, 328:24, 352:12, 357:16, 360:6, 373:1, 378:15, 378:23</p> <p>4,000 [1] - 230:10</p> <p>4.2 [1] - 268:23</p> <p>4.69 [1] - 374:2</p> <p>40 [5] - 97:11, 179:15, 180:2, 198:4, 198:14</p> <p>40-year [1] - 122:3</p> <p>400 [1] - 106:24</p> <p>400-87-6 [1] - 338:7</p> <p>401(k) [1] - 244:18</p> <p>405 [1] - 13:12</p> <p>408 [1] - 2:22</p> <p>41 [1] - 327:24</p> <p>414 [1] - 2:7</p> <p>415 [1] - 12:13</p> <p>42 [1] - 374:25</p> <p>423 [1] - 13:13</p> <p>425 [1] - 5:4</p> <p>429 [1] - 5:5</p> <p>44 [1] - 375:19</p> <p>443 [1] - 5:5</p> <p>45 [4] - 3:5, 10:20, 202:6, 202:7</p> <p>450 [1] - 5:6</p> <p>455 [1] - 5:6</p> <p>46 [1] - 330:20</p> <p>464 [1] - 5:7</p> <p>465 [1] - 5:8</p> <p>466 [1] - 5:9</p> <p>468 [1] - 5:10</p> <p>469 [1] - 5:10</p> <p>472 [1] - 5:12</p> <p>474 [2] - 11:6, 13:6</p> <p>477 [1] - 5:13</p> <p>48 [1] - 272:18</p> <p>4800 [1] - 2:11</p> <p>498 [1] - 5:13</p> <p>4:02 [1] - 264:16</p>	
		5	
		<p>5 [19] - 9:11, 11:24, 24:5,</p>	

<p>39:4, 63:15, 88:3, 111:12, 132:7, 141:24, 192:25, 262:18, 273:16, 273:17, 285:1, 342:14, 342:21, 352:13, 373:19</p> <p>5.73 [1] - 374:5</p> <p>5.78 [1] - 374:6</p> <p>50 [17] - 85:17, 146:6, 154:6, 165:15, 191:1, 196:12, 196:13, 245:15, 245:16, 245:18, 245:25, 247:17, 263:5, 263:6, 296:12, 327:20</p> <p>50-50 [1] - 296:12</p> <p>50/50 [1] - 295:23</p> <p>500 [6] - 160:15, 160:17, 191:24, 354:14, 354:18, 355:6</p> <p>506 [1] - 5:14</p> <p>514 [1] - 5:14</p> <p>519 [1] - 5:15</p> <p>522 [1] - 5:16</p> <p>528 [1] - 5:17</p> <p>534 [2] - 5:19, 11:7</p> <p>540 [1] - 5:19</p> <p>541 [1] - 12:14</p> <p>545 [1] - 13:14</p> <p>547 [1] - 13:16</p> <p>548 [1] - 12:16</p> <p>551 [1] - 13:18</p> <p>552 [1] - 5:20</p> <p>55401 [1] - 2:8</p> <p>55402-4129 [1] - 2:12</p> <p>557 [1] - 5:21</p> <p>564 [1] - 5:21</p> <p>573 [2] - 13:19, 13:20</p> <p>575 [1] - 5:22</p> <p>576 [1] - 5:22</p> <p>578 [1] - 5:23</p> <p>580 [1] - 5:24</p> <p>585 [1] - 13:22</p> <p>58505-0480 [2] - 2:17, 2:23</p> <p>587 [2] - 6:3, 11:9</p> <p>590 [1] - 6:3</p> <p>591 [1] - 6:4</p> <p>596 [2] - 6:6, 11:10</p> <p>599 [1] - 6:7</p> <p>5:02 [1] - 306:4</p> <p>5:03 [1] - 66:17</p> <p>5th [3] - 2:7, 179:13, 179:20</p>	<p>6.7 [1] - 272:2</p> <p>6.8 [1] - 272:2</p> <p>60 [6] - 180:3, 180:13, 198:10, 198:13, 198:14, 275:6</p> <p>600 [2] - 2:17, 2:22</p> <p>601 [1] - 6:8</p> <p>604 [1] - 6:8</p> <p>606 [1] - 6:9</p> <p>609 [1] - 6:11</p> <p>612 [1] - 6:12</p> <p>615 [1] - 6:13</p> <p>616 [1] - 6:14</p> <p>621 [1] - 6:16</p> <p>623 [1] - 6:17</p> <p>627 [1] - 6:17</p> <p>630 [1] - 6:18</p> <p>632 [1] - 6:18</p> <p>641 [2] - 6:21, 12:17</p> <p>647 [1] - 6:22</p> <p>65 [1] - 12:7</p> <p>657 [1] - 11:11</p> <p>66 [1] - 165:14</p> <p>662 [1] - 6:22</p> <p>663 [1] - 6:23</p> <p>668 [1] - 6:23</p> <p>67 [1] - 12:8</p> <p>672 [1] - 6:24</p> <p>676 [1] - 6:25</p> <p>678 [1] - 7:3</p> <p>679 [1] - 7:3</p> <p>68 [1] - 328:23</p> <p>681 [1] - 7:4</p> <p>684 [1] - 7:5</p> <p>686 [1] - 7:6</p> <p>687 [1] - 7:7</p> <p>691 [2] - 7:9, 12:18</p> <p>697 [1] - 7:9</p> <p>6:02 [2] - 306:4, 306:12</p>	<p>742 [1] - 7:13</p> <p>745 [1] - 7:14</p> <p>749 [2] - 7:16, 12:22</p> <p>75 [2] - 58:4, 142:10</p> <p>750 [3] - 15:17, 56:12, 57:6</p> <p>755 [1] - 7:16</p> <p>759 [1] - 7:17</p> <p>762 [1] - 7:17</p> <p>768 [1] - 7:18</p> <p>769 [1] - 7:18</p> <p>774 [1] - 7:19</p> <p>778 [1] - 7:20</p> <p>781 [1] - 7:20</p> <p>782 [1] - 7:21</p> <p>784 [1] - 8:3</p> <p>785 [1] - 12:23</p> <p>790 [1] - 8:3</p> <p>7:00 [1] - 341:21</p> <p>7th [2] - 342:13, 343:16</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">9</p> <p>9 [6] - 12:8, 67:17, 67:22, 108:14, 165:21, 320:22</p> <p>9,000 [1] - 350:4</p> <p>9.25 [1] - 15:13</p> <p>9/11 [3] - 206:8, 206:17, 206:25</p> <p>90 [4] - 2:12, 75:7, 124:10, 124:13</p> <p>900 [1] - 357:1</p> <p>93 [1] - 13:5</p> <p>9:00 [1] - 15:5</p> <p>9:06 [1] - 15:2</p> <p>9A [3] - 9:17, 173:20, 173:25</p> <p>9B [3] - 9:18, 173:20, 174:1</p> <p>9th [1] - 177:17</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">6</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">7</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">8</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">A</p>
<p>6 [18] - 9:12, 12:3, 24:9, 39:4, 39:10, 39:16, 39:23, 78:4, 163:13, 222:2, 245:7, 273:16, 273:17, 305:19, 306:2, 320:20, 328:12, 378:15</p>	<p>7 [14] - 9:14, 12:4, 25:25, 26:4, 33:6, 39:24, 66:7, 66:10, 156:11, 159:22, 183:12, 224:25, 272:18, 280:24</p> <p>7,500 [2] - 350:5, 350:6</p> <p>7.9 [1] - 272:24</p> <p>70 [2] - 54:15, 58:20</p> <p>701 [1] - 11:13</p> <p>704 [1] - 11:14</p> <p>708 [1] - 7:10</p> <p>716 [1] - 7:10</p> <p>723 [1] - 7:11</p> <p>727 [1] - 7:11</p> <p>731 [1] - 7:12</p> <p>733 [1] - 12:20</p> <p>735 [1] - 7:12</p>	<p>8 [15] - 9:15, 12:6, 65:5, 65:18, 65:21, 79:13, 159:14, 173:20, 173:25, 229:20, 230:6, 292:24, 293:9, 293:11, 341:21</p> <p>8-068 [1] - 282:5</p> <p>8-20-2013 [1] - 13:12</p> <p>8.05 [1] - 15:23</p> <p>8.4 [6] - 192:10, 192:12, 192:15, 192:19, 192:24, 193:3</p> <p>8.5 [1] - 15:22</p> <p>8.92 [1] - 144:12</p> <p>806 [1] - 8:4</p> <p>810 [1] - 8:4</p> <p>813 [1] - 92:8</p> <p>816 [1] - 8:5</p> <p>82 [1] - 287:2</p> <p>821 [1] - 8:5</p> <p>822 [1] - 8:6</p> <p>823 [1] - 8:6</p> <p>826 [1] - 11:15</p> <p>828 [2] - 8:8, 12:24</p> <p>830 [1] - 8:9</p> <p>833 [1] - 8:9</p> <p>835 [1] - 8:10</p> <p>839 [1] - 8:10</p> <p>845 [2] - 11:16, 12:25</p> <p>848 [2] - 13:24, 14:3</p> <p>85 [1] - 253:8</p> <p>870 [1] - 14:4</p> <p>88 [2] - 3:6, 272:20</p> <p>8:01 [1] - 383:24</p> <p>8:02 [1] - 384:14</p>	<p>a.m [4] - 15:2, 15:5, 66:11, 84:4</p> <p>abandon [1] - 269:22</p> <p>abandoned [1] - 271:3</p> <p>abeyance [1] - 322:9</p> <p>ability [8] - 19:5, 63:25, 82:24, 122:15, 136:6, 149:3, 178:16, 235:3</p> <p>able [35] - 28:20, 47:22, 51:17, 52:16, 60:4, 115:8, 116:14, 118:3, 140:18, 169:6, 169:8, 185:7, 185:21, 194:16, 196:2, 197:17, 197:25, 200:7, 210:16, 213:3, 218:3, 223:11, 225:4, 227:18, 233:3, 236:16, 236:17, 253:3, 256:20, 259:19, 295:2, 314:3, 338:22, 362:3, 380:17</p> <p>abreast [1] - 97:22</p> <p>absolute [1] - 278:16</p> <p>absolutely [4] - 82:6, 245:13, 278:15, 367:5</p> <p>acceded [1] - 370:5</p> <p>accept [1] - 357:24</p> <p>acceptable [2] - 87:2, 153:25</p> <p>accepted [3] - 313:19, 313:21, 337:4</p> <p>access [2] - 34:13, 86:3</p> <p>accident [3] - 62:1, 62:8, 187:17</p> <p>accidents [1] - 207:3</p> <p>accommodate [2] - 25:2, 45:23</p> <p>accommodating [1] - 186:20</p> <p>accomplishes [1] - 324:11</p> <p>accomplishing [1] - 161:25</p>

<p>according [2] - 111:20, 329:1</p> <p>Accordinging [1] - 149:2</p> <p>accordingly [2] - 176:7, 312:14</p> <p>account [5] - 234:12, 298:20, 303:13, 319:23, 355:1</p> <p>accountable [3] - 218:8, 236:19, 260:20</p> <p>accountants [2] - 297:15, 299:14</p> <p>accounted [1] - 280:4</p> <p>accounting [12] - 29:16, 32:10, 32:15, 143:15, 171:17, 246:16, 246:19, 267:10, 267:11, 267:21, 269:7, 303:13</p> <p>Accounting [1] - 279:4</p> <p>accounts [3] - 275:5, 323:23</p> <p>accrete [3] - 284:18, 298:15, 303:1</p> <p>accreted [1] - 298:10</p> <p>accretion [1] - 284:24</p> <p>accrue [3] - 47:15, 246:24, 284:18</p> <p>accrued [1] - 246:20</p> <p>accumulated [15] - 270:15, 281:18, 285:25, 286:4, 287:18, 290:13, 290:21, 291:7, 299:17, 299:21, 299:23, 300:4, 300:8, 302:20, 303:21</p> <p>accumulating [1] - 290:12</p> <p>accuracy [3] - 308:24, 309:4, 310:19</p> <p>accurate [8] - 56:3, 80:7, 91:10, 92:4, 92:5, 162:21, 312:9, 331:14</p> <p>accurately [6] - 309:7, 323:14, 327:11, 332:21, 355:16, 364:6</p> <p>accuse [1] - 278:10</p> <p>achieve [6] - 64:17, 85:14, 86:8, 118:3, 240:5, 258:17</p> <p>achieved [1] - 149:5</p> <p>achieving [1] - 258:6</p> <p>acknowledge [1] - 44:3</p> <p>acknowledging [1] - 227:25</p> <p>acquisition [3] - 56:12, 253:17, 254:9</p> <p>acquisitions [1] - 43:23</p> <p>Act [1] - 345:16</p> <p>act [3] - 49:17, 77:23</p> <p>acting [1] - 320:12</p> <p>action [3] - 147:3, 160:22, 205:3</p> <p>actions [2] - 205:19, 206:7</p> <p>activities [5] - 61:16, 61:17, 96:6, 241:18, 269:12</p> <p>activity [8] - 72:19, 72:20,</p>	<p>76:1, 77:5, 77:11, 183:13, 241:21, 242:17</p> <p>Actual [1] - 12:20</p> <p>actual [21] - 35:14, 47:1, 78:8, 78:11, 79:17, 79:20, 83:8, 127:16, 127:20, 144:6, 144:11, 164:3, 193:10, 195:9, 200:14, 205:8, 247:11, 268:10, 296:25, 311:20, 327:13</p> <p>actuals [4] - 78:16, 78:19, 161:22, 327:6</p> <p>actuarial [2] - 143:12, 143:14</p> <p>adamant [1] - 371:2</p> <p>add [17] - 19:18, 22:11, 55:11, 135:23, 138:5, 138:14, 202:24, 235:4, 236:3, 240:18, 246:3, 295:10, 317:19, 334:16, 356:25, 379:6, 379:7</p> <p>added [5] - 33:22, 135:23, 224:24, 310:15, 310:18</p> <p>adding [1] - 161:12</p> <p>addition [7] - 17:10, 87:13, 164:1, 176:10, 214:2, 214:17, 221:19</p> <p>additional [16] - 15:11, 26:5, 58:7, 106:4, 108:6, 113:14, 142:16, 169:17, 180:21, 181:14, 181:16, 185:11, 206:18, 240:20, 354:18</p> <p>additions [5] - 29:4, 163:19, 163:21, 163:25, 164:4</p> <p>address [15] - 41:17, 43:13, 51:5, 81:21, 101:9, 101:18, 102:2, 103:1, 104:23, 166:11, 177:8, 227:9, 253:3, 256:20, 263:12</p> <p>addressed [5] - 36:15, 43:24, 53:6, 100:21, 287:6</p> <p>addresses [1] - 340:2</p> <p>addressing [2] - 101:16, 108:4</p> <p>adds [2] - 46:9, 275:15</p> <p>adequate [2] - 84:21, 293:11</p> <p>adjunct [1] - 347:11</p> <p>adjust [1] - 121:2</p> <p>adjusted [1] - 301:4</p> <p>adjustment [3] - 171:24, 192:22, 224:23</p> <p>adjustments [5] - 99:20, 157:11, 157:13, 246:21, 267:19</p> <p>administer [2] - 30:11, 343:9</p> <p>administration [1] - 307:25</p> <p>ADMINISTRATIVE [1] - 1:23</p> <p>Administrative [1] - 16:4</p> <p>administrative [8] - 16:5, 16:8, 225:13, 342:17, 342:22, 343:5, 343:6,</p>	<p>343:12</p> <p>admit [4] - 65:18, 67:17, 230:24, 332:24</p> <p>admitted [20] - 25:21, 26:4, 45:6, 65:22, 67:23, 93:14, 134:13, 134:16, 145:20, 156:4, 156:12, 170:6, 173:11, 174:1, 209:12, 265:20, 265:21, 267:1, 282:18, 307:8</p> <p>admitting [1] - 92:21</p> <p>adopt [6] - 30:24, 31:3, 308:7, 320:12, 322:22, 367:20</p> <p>adopted [15] - 30:6, 31:8, 31:11, 31:13, 33:15, 143:7, 265:11, 267:21, 312:15, 318:22, 318:24, 321:24, 321:25, 322:3, 359:12</p> <p>ADP [12] - 13:6, 91:7, 91:21, 91:22, 92:2, 107:1, 123:5, 125:8, 125:12, 125:14, 126:3, 197:20</p> <p>ADPs [2] - 101:21, 125:22</p> <p>advance [5] - 38:13, 43:24, 91:5, 125:6, 314:24</p> <p>advantage [2] - 121:4, 350:7</p> <p>advent [1] - 125:6</p> <p>adverse [1] - 32:16</p> <p>advise [1] - 21:21</p> <p>adviser [1] - 17:15</p> <p>ADVISER [1] - 2:24</p> <p>advisers [1] - 19:25</p> <p>advising [1] - 17:16</p> <p>advisory [1] - 267:18</p> <p>Advocacy [3] - 142:23, 226:7, 228:22</p> <p>advocacy [16] - 17:1, 17:5, 17:9, 19:24, 20:15, 22:25, 25:9, 25:16, 25:24, 29:2, 29:8, 36:10, 41:4, 308:8, 313:14</p> <p>ADVOCACY [2] - 2:19, 6:19</p> <p>affairs [1] - 120:14</p> <p>affect [11] - 19:4, 42:18, 44:24, 69:3, 122:2, 122:3, 260:23, 315:22, 315:24, 318:1, 355:13</p> <p>affected [6] - 52:19, 66:9, 66:19, 72:5, 114:23, 227:5</p> <p>affecting [1] - 102:9</p> <p>afford [1] - 49:6</p> <p>affordability [3] - 234:16, 258:3, 259:1</p> <p>affordable [4] - 64:14, 117:22, 118:2, 260:21</p> <p>affording [1] - 178:16</p> <p>afield [1] - 72:4</p> <p>aforementioned [1] - 331:9</p> <p>afternoon [4] - 141:11,</p>	<p>163:11, 163:12, 174:11</p> <p>agency [1] - 147:14</p> <p>ages [1] - 196:25</p> <p>aggregate [2] - 52:24, 365:16</p> <p>aggressive [2] - 113:8, 113:12</p> <p>ago [11] - 20:18, 24:13, 57:21, 81:5, 95:14, 99:22, 123:21, 130:6, 130:11, 134:24, 202:21</p> <p>agree [15] - 19:17, 41:7, 51:25, 53:23, 103:18, 103:24, 103:25, 117:8, 270:7, 276:2, 329:18, 333:25, 363:11, 363:14, 372:13</p> <p>agreed [6] - 24:13, 26:12, 26:16, 38:7, 153:19, 270:5</p> <p>agreeing [2] - 27:10, 324:16</p> <p>agreement [8] - 29:25, 43:14, 44:10, 75:20, 158:16, 229:13, 376:8, 383:4</p> <p>agreements [2] - 43:8, 90:9</p> <p>ahead [9] - 64:25, 144:21, 150:16, 156:4, 159:18, 213:4, 227:1, 304:3, 324:20</p> <p>AIP [32] - 142:25, 215:9, 219:10, 219:12, 219:17, 220:7, 220:21, 222:12, 224:9, 224:12, 224:18, 225:10, 225:21, 226:4, 228:12, 230:4, 234:10, 235:6, 243:14, 244:4, 244:7, 244:12, 244:21, 244:24, 245:4, 247:18, 247:24, 247:25, 248:9, 262:16, 263:2, 263:14</p> <p>air [1] - 202:19</p> <p>algebra [1] - 346:18</p> <p>algorithm [1] - 378:17</p> <p>align [1] - 213:6</p> <p>aligned [2] - 77:9, 212:9</p> <p>alike [1] - 211:8</p> <p>alliances [2] - 184:23, 186:3</p> <p>allocate [9] - 273:14, 316:11, 316:13, 323:18, 349:17, 367:21, 372:16, 376:9</p> <p>allocated [11] - 272:7, 272:12, 273:9, 292:12, 309:18, 318:15, 319:25, 353:23, 371:10, 374:13, 375:14</p> <p>allocates [2] - 71:16, 313:10</p> <p>allocating [6] - 32:2, 272:14, 308:23, 313:4, 314:8, 349:19</p> <p>allocation [53] - 13:4, 13:19,</p>
---	---	--	--

<p>31:16, 42:11, 73:5, 86:22, 87:12, 87:13, 167:7, 313:1, 313:8, 313:10, 313:18, 313:23, 319:21, 320:2, 320:3, 320:8, 320:9, 320:12, 320:16, 322:23, 323:17, 324:11, 324:16, 325:12, 325:16, 329:17, 335:22, 338:1, 339:8, 342:16, 343:6, 343:7, 344:16, 348:18, 355:24, 356:1, 356:18, 357:21, 357:23, 357:25, 358:5, 358:10, 361:17, 367:20, 368:19, 372:11, 377:21, 378:2, 379:6, 380:19</p> <p>Allocation [1] - 344:11</p> <p>allocations [3] - 361:1, 362:2, 371:18</p> <p>allocator [19] - 30:6, 30:7, 30:15, 30:17, 30:20, 31:2, 31:4, 31:7, 31:10, 31:21, 42:8, 42:10, 308:12, 321:19, 322:17, 322:18, 324:25, 343:14, 356:9</p> <p>allocators [1] - 30:18</p> <p>allow [13] - 47:4, 54:13, 74:12, 84:17, 84:19, 103:19, 116:10, 126:21, 127:17, 147:20, 175:1, 179:9, 218:15</p> <p>allowable [1] - 219:12</p> <p>allowance [1] - 219:9</p> <p>allowed [6] - 75:7, 179:6, 180:6, 247:20, 290:14, 366:16</p> <p>allowing [1] - 42:25</p> <p>allows [3] - 114:19, 136:3, 352:7</p> <p>almost [2] - 133:5, 167:13</p> <p>alone [2] - 57:14, 325:15</p> <p>aloud [1] - 286:7</p> <p>alternative [3] - 54:22, 138:7, 151:5</p> <p>alternatives [4] - 55:2, 314:8, 314:15, 372:8</p> <p>altogether [1] - 247:18</p> <p>America [1] - 182:15</p> <p>amortization [1] - 143:25</p> <p>amortize [1] - 274:14</p> <p>amortized [3] - 129:20, 143:20, 143:22</p> <p>amortizing [2] - 88:13, 129:4</p> <p>amount [30] - 22:23, 51:4, 54:14, 88:16, 88:19, 88:21, 131:11, 132:9, 134:25, 135:23, 136:4, 149:18, 212:16, 222:8, 246:8, 246:10, 247:10, 247:11, 247:19, 260:22, 261:15,</p>	<p>262:22, 279:20, 283:9, 283:11, 283:12, 299:9, 300:14, 301:12, 381:18</p> <p>amounts [7] - 16:1, 142:13, 143:18, 211:14, 286:24, 287:2, 358:18</p> <p>amplify [1] - 376:23</p> <p>analogy [1] - 361:20</p> <p>analyses [1] - 198:8</p> <p>Analysis [1] - 9:10</p> <p>analysis [11] - 62:8, 79:12, 157:6, 180:8, 228:18, 239:2, 281:4, 326:8, 347:12, 369:10, 374:15</p> <p>analyst [2] - 17:7, 332:4</p> <p>analyze [1] - 348:23</p> <p>Andahl [1] - 141:13</p> <p>anecdotal [2] - 187:16, 254:8</p> <p>ANN [1] - 5:2</p> <p>Ann [6] - 10:4, 10:6, 11:4, 34:16, 48:20, 306:2</p> <p>ANNE [2] - 5:18, 6:10</p> <p>Anne [4] - 10:12, 10:13, 11:7, 253:3</p> <p>announced [2] - 384:4, 384:6</p> <p>announcement [1] - 197:13</p> <p>annual [54] - 15:12, 35:24, 148:22, 210:5, 211:1, 211:6, 211:14, 211:16, 211:25, 212:9, 212:13, 213:5, 215:9, 215:12, 216:12, 216:15, 219:25, 220:17, 221:4, 221:5, 222:13, 223:16, 224:12, 224:16, 225:5, 233:22, 234:17, 235:11, 235:18, 236:14, 236:21, 238:1, 238:12, 239:3, 239:10, 239:20, 241:14, 247:14, 248:6, 249:14, 257:21, 257:22, 258:13, 258:16, 259:2, 259:6, 259:20, 260:18, 268:23, 270:17, 272:25, 284:25, 312:1, 313:12</p> <p>annually [7] - 217:7, 240:23, 247:8, 248:18, 249:4, 249:15, 260:9</p> <p>anomalies [1] - 353:18</p> <p>anomalous [1] - 353:11</p> <p>answer [51] - 21:13, 57:20, 57:25, 69:20, 90:1, 95:17, 109:8, 110:18, 119:11, 126:4, 155:14, 159:4, 166:12, 169:9, 170:22, 171:22, 176:24, 188:20, 190:8, 192:23, 193:5, 193:11, 193:20, 198:3, 200:23, 202:25, 231:18,</p>	<p>232:16, 232:23, 233:6, 234:22, 236:2, 236:5, 237:7, 250:7, 252:4, 261:15, 261:16, 314:4, 325:23, 326:2, 329:2, 333:20, 336:3, 338:13, 340:8, 366:1, 366:21, 378:13, 378:14</p> <p>answered [6] - 66:25, 151:23, 172:3, 232:13, 232:21, 263:10</p> <p>anticipate [1] - 179:9</p> <p>anticipated [2] - 56:3, 179:1</p> <p>anticipating [2] - 179:21, 190:20</p> <p>anytime [1] - 380:18</p> <p>anyway [5] - 140:1, 184:12, 319:17, 343:20, 360:23</p> <p>apart [3] - 20:19, 122:20, 202:5</p> <p>API [2] - 257:8, 263:6</p> <p>apologize [22] - 62:23, 69:7, 69:10, 70:10, 142:4, 174:2, 177:21, 180:17, 184:8, 188:13, 272:21, 290:2, 295:14, 314:1, 324:6, 325:17, 327:14, 330:6, 347:3, 370:14, 372:24, 378:2</p> <p>appeal [3] - 27:12, 126:21, 322:8</p> <p>appealing [1] - 27:16</p> <p>appearance [1] - 63:4</p> <p>appearances [1] - 16:10</p> <p>appeared [2] - 25:17, 379:24</p> <p>appearing [2] - 16:13, 16:18</p> <p>apples [1] - 365:24</p> <p>applicable [2] - 234:5, 314:17</p> <p>APPLICANT [1] - 2:13</p> <p>applicant [2] - 16:11, 24:16</p> <p>Application [1] - 1:7</p> <p>application [6] - 15:9, 24:17, 25:18, 44:14, 157:8, 346:3</p> <p>Applications [1] - 13:6</p> <p>applied [8] - 30:9, 188:12, 308:21, 314:23, 322:25, 346:1, 346:2, 348:6</p> <p>applies [2] - 235:3, 235:15</p> <p>apply [6] - 206:24, 250:22, 251:5, 252:7, 269:10, 368:15</p> <p>applying [1] - 237:21</p> <p>apportionment [1] - 342:16</p> <p>appreciate [25] - 19:23, 28:18, 40:9, 41:4, 44:9, 47:25, 49:10, 49:23, 103:6, 119:7, 119:14, 119:17, 122:6, 138:20, 139:15, 159:2, 176:23, 250:7,</p>	<p>264:25, 280:23, 300:23, 339:19, 343:21, 362:21, 370:24</p> <p>appreciated [1] - 294:14</p> <p>appreciation [1] - 218:4</p> <p>approach [19] - 64:22, 67:11, 104:14, 115:17, 122:5, 144:23, 159:16, 178:19, 183:16, 206:23, 255:4, 271:3, 281:23, 311:11, 311:16, 313:3, 320:15, 331:4, 358:12</p> <p>approached [1] - 80:2</p> <p>approaches [4] - 190:4, 205:16, 256:2, 372:15</p> <p>appropriate [28] - 32:4, 42:10, 43:15, 46:20, 48:16, 48:23, 53:16, 87:7, 89:14, 127:19, 157:11, 169:7, 171:16, 171:22, 212:17, 288:20, 289:3, 310:14, 321:19, 329:19, 329:23, 330:1, 331:1, 334:10, 334:12, 342:15, 354:5, 355:8</p> <p>appropriately [6] - 33:14, 34:22, 37:1, 44:18, 48:14, 349:1</p> <p>approval [8] - 40:14, 41:19, 58:10, 175:4, 179:12, 179:21, 198:1, 202:24</p> <p>approve [8] - 74:4, 104:12, 197:21, 233:17, 313:15, 314:6, 356:1, 361:10</p> <p>approved [32] - 13:5, 15:20, 16:1, 24:18, 32:8, 34:25, 35:18, 58:15, 73:21, 75:18, 75:19, 87:1, 87:12, 158:21, 167:13, 177:16, 270:7, 280:19, 287:1, 287:5, 288:4, 300:12, 312:7, 312:10, 314:10, 314:12, 320:22, 322:13, 322:25, 355:24, 382:13, 382:20</p> <p>approximate [1] - 248:14</p> <p>April [9] - 13:18, 327:8, 327:21, 328:2, 328:4, 333:23, 333:25, 342:13, 343:16</p> <p>ARC [8] - 284:14, 300:21, 302:19, 302:20, 302:21, 302:24</p> <p>area [18] - 51:6, 158:13, 161:18, 162:25, 169:3, 192:14, 202:18, 213:10, 220:15, 246:17, 246:19, 246:23, 256:19, 275:22, 277:17, 304:2, 349:18, 365:4</p> <p>areas [13] - 105:1, 114:22,</p>
---	--	---	--

<p>152:17, 164:2, 227:24, 234:12, 241:22, 254:12, 257:24, 277:23, 279:13, 365:8, 373:7</p> <p>arena [2] - 133:1, 175:17</p> <p>argue [1] - 153:12</p> <p>argued [2] - 31:6, 271:1</p> <p>argues [1] - 33:11</p> <p>arguing [1] - 366:24</p> <p>argument [5] - 72:14, 123:23, 292:4, 361:1, 382:24</p> <p>arguments [1] - 271:8</p> <p>ARO [20] - 12:10, 32:22, 269:3, 269:19, 270:15, 279:2, 279:16, 280:12, 281:16, 281:17, 283:1, 285:25, 289:20, 298:14, 299:10, 299:11, 300:9, 303:1, 303:15, 303:19</p> <p>AROs [27] - 32:14, 32:21, 33:16, 269:3, 269:5, 269:6, 269:10, 269:13, 269:17, 270:4, 279:3, 279:25, 280:2, 280:14, 281:2, 281:4, 281:9, 283:7, 283:9, 285:23, 287:7, 288:18, 290:8, 290:9, 290:10, 291:1</p> <p>arrangement [1] - 59:20</p> <p>array [3] - 219:11, 244:19, 333:15</p> <p>article [1] - 13:12</p> <p>articulate [1] - 39:12</p> <p>AS [1] - 2:24</p> <p>asbestos [23] - 32:22, 279:12, 279:14, 279:15, 279:16, 280:13, 283:23, 284:2, 284:5, 285:7, 298:7, 298:18, 301:6, 301:7, 301:10, 301:11, 301:12, 301:14, 302:8, 303:16</p> <p>ash [1] - 298:8</p> <p>aside [5] - 26:23, 118:8, 221:4, 224:18, 349:2</p> <p>aspect [3] - 41:7, 75:2, 220:17</p> <p>aspects [3] - 78:13, 195:5, 227:12</p> <p>aspire [1] - 216:6</p> <p>asserting [1] - 89:21</p> <p>assertion [2] - 242:4, 270:3</p> <p>asserts [1] - 270:21</p> <p>assess [12] - 215:25, 238:6, 238:10, 241:6, 241:9, 241:15, 241:19, 241:21, 248:22, 249:7, 260:1, 260:19</p> <p>assessed [1] - 216:9</p> <p>assessing [1] - 95:15</p>	<p>assessment [3] - 101:7, 216:12, 240:8</p> <p>asset [49] - 33:2, 33:10, 33:21, 33:23, 34:3, 34:5, 267:9, 268:3, 269:3, 275:12, 277:1, 277:2, 278:7, 278:20, 283:8, 284:7, 284:12, 284:13, 284:21, 286:14, 287:22, 287:24, 291:10, 296:10, 298:2, 299:7, 299:8, 299:9, 299:13, 299:16, 299:20, 299:23, 299:24, 300:21, 301:16, 302:5, 302:9, 302:10, 302:17, 302:22, 302:23, 302:24, 302:25, 303:11, 303:12, 303:18, 303:19</p> <p>assets [19] - 32:24, 32:25, 33:13, 267:23, 267:24, 268:2, 268:13, 268:20, 269:16, 270:1, 272:8, 273:12, 273:14, 273:19, 274:16, 278:19, 299:14, 303:3, 304:25</p> <p>assign [4] - 323:18, 348:18, 349:1, 367:21</p> <p>assigned [2] - 183:12, 252:5</p> <p>assigns [1] - 346:4</p> <p>Assistant [1] - 2:6</p> <p>assistant [1] - 28:16</p> <p>associate [1] - 195:19</p> <p>associated [6] - 91:2, 115:10, 121:13, 191:14, 220:17, 261:19</p> <p>Associates [1] - 141:12</p> <p>assume [13] - 53:13, 131:17, 246:8, 246:14, 246:19, 284:16, 284:23, 295:14, 322:9, 346:2, 355:5, 358:10, 367:12</p> <p>assumed [1] - 381:7</p> <p>assuming [10] - 129:24, 131:15, 191:15, 243:13, 243:21, 278:21, 285:6, 368:1, 368:4, 368:7</p> <p>assumption [2] - 170:23, 332:21</p> <p>assumptions [4] - 79:3, 79:5, 196:17, 271:8</p> <p>assure [2] - 101:14, 176:18</p> <p>assuring [1] - 189:22</p> <p>attached [1] - 232:9</p> <p>Attachment [6] - 68:4, 70:10, 70:15, 297:1, 297:6, 297:7</p> <p>attachment [3] - 71:4, 232:4, 294:15</p> <p>attachments [1] - 70:12</p> <p>attain [2] - 211:9, 223:12</p> <p>attempt [2] - 160:22, 341:9</p>	<p>attempting [2] - 160:25, 265:14</p> <p>attempts [1] - 319:22</p> <p>attended [2] - 20:5, 22:14</p> <p>attention [4] - 146:16, 146:23, 304:15, 330:18</p> <p>Attorney [2] - 2:16, 2:21</p> <p>attorney [7] - 28:10, 232:18, 232:22, 232:24, 252:16, 252:24, 254:21</p> <p>attorneys [5] - 80:4, 92:16, 119:20, 167:6, 383:6</p> <p>Attorneys [1] - 2:11</p> <p>attract [12] - 48:10, 48:14, 48:23, 51:14, 51:17, 51:18, 84:21, 113:24, 210:8, 210:16, 225:7, 248:5</p> <p>attracting [3] - 188:5, 210:13, 261:9</p> <p>attraction [1] - 182:22</p> <p>attractive [1] - 125:25</p> <p>attributed [1] - 39:13</p> <p>attributes [1] - 188:11</p> <p>August [8] - 1:18, 15:2, 15:5, 177:17, 306:13, 383:25, 384:10, 384:14</p> <p>authoritative [1] - 345:12</p> <p>authorities [1] - 198:19</p> <p>authority [2] - 200:2, 294:24</p> <p>authorized [3] - 144:3, 144:5, 280:19</p> <p>authors [1] - 329:11</p> <p>auxiliary [2] - 206:12, 206:17</p> <p>availability [2] - 176:8, 340:3</p> <p>available [20] - 34:12, 45:8, 49:1, 60:15, 95:17, 159:6, 174:19, 176:24, 177:2, 184:4, 186:13, 213:12, 218:14, 225:10, 257:20, 271:14, 312:17, 338:16, 338:22, 340:1</p> <p>avenue [1] - 77:16</p> <p>Avenue [1] - 2:22</p> <p>average [17] - 22:19, 35:3, 35:17, 79:19, 162:10, 271:2, 271:5, 274:13, 274:15, 372:18, 372:25, 373:24, 374:2, 374:6, 374:19, 374:21, 380:21</p> <p>averages [1] - 35:9</p> <p>avoid [1] - 50:23</p> <p>avoidable [1] - 157:14</p> <p>avoided [1] - 175:12</p> <p>avoiding [1] - 139:6</p> <p>await [1] - 154:3</p> <p>award [2] - 221:23, 222:15</p> <p>awarded [1] - 75:7</p> <p>awards [1] - 221:18</p> <p>aware [18] - 46:14, 67:6, 78:22, 95:24, 140:15,</p>	<p>140:20, 147:13, 153:4, 218:17, 218:21, 219:9, 224:22, 228:20, 318:20, 322:16, 322:19, 372:25, 377:18</p> <p>awful [1] - 100:25</p> <p>awkwardly [1] - 365:11</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">B</p> <hr/> <p>baby [1] - 182:4</p> <p>backbone [1] - 365:2</p> <p>background [4] - 150:20, 242:10, 263:22, 331:23</p> <p>backing [1] - 112:8</p> <p>backyard [2] - 277:8, 279:24</p> <p>bad [2] - 33:16, 33:17</p> <p>balance [12] - 18:20, 19:10, 72:23, 84:23, 280:16, 280:17, 299:2, 299:11, 299:12, 299:15, 303:17, 367:9</p> <p>balanced [1] - 300:9</p> <p>balances [3] - 37:1, 44:18, 303:19</p> <p>balancing [3] - 50:4, 301:18, 303:12</p> <p>ball [2] - 190:14, 196:8</p> <p>bankrupt [1] - 128:7</p> <p>bargaining [7] - 224:21, 224:24, 229:17, 249:16, 250:23, 251:5</p> <p>Barnett [2] - 2:10, 16:18</p> <p>Base [1] - 13:6</p> <p>base [61] - 36:16, 43:11, 53:20, 132:6, 148:12, 174:20, 182:13, 191:10, 192:1, 210:19, 211:14, 211:16, 212:2, 214:18, 220:1, 222:13, 222:16, 222:23, 223:3, 223:14, 223:16, 223:20, 223:24, 225:12, 225:14, 225:19, 228:11, 228:12, 235:12, 235:19, 236:8, 236:9, 236:14, 236:20, 236:22, 236:24, 237:3, 237:9, 237:10, 237:15, 239:9, 239:17, 241:2, 243:14, 243:19, 244:9, 245:18, 245:19, 245:23, 248:7, 248:17, 249:13, 260:2, 260:23, 262:8, 262:23, 281:19, 281:21, 288:4, 324:23, 328:4</p> <p>based [68] - 15:21, 21:6, 30:15, 36:22, 40:15, 51:12, 52:23, 58:15, 72:10, 79:3, 85:4, 85:6, 85:16, 95:16,</p>
--	--	--	---

<p>97:4, 112:5, 131:15, 158:17, 221:3, 221:15, 221:18, 221:23, 223:23, 224:20, 233:23, 233:24, 234:11, 237:2, 237:3, 237:25, 238:8, 238:9, 238:13, 241:6, 242:11, 242:19, 244:25, 245:20, 246:21, 248:23, 249:5, 249:10, 255:4, 255:12, 256:1, 269:6, 269:7, 271:8, 274:21, 279:9, 286:25, 287:13, 287:18, 287:19, 287:21, 296:11, 300:25, 305:5, 313:5, 313:11, 323:19, 324:25, 330:1, 331:8, 331:14, 346:4, 353:24, 370:2</p> <p>baseline [6] - 240:1, 259:11, 259:12, 259:13, 259:14, 278:25</p> <p>baseload [13] - 47:6, 57:19, 108:4, 109:11, 109:18, 110:16, 110:17, 121:20, 124:13, 135:21, 135:24, 337:8, 354:12</p> <p>basic [5] - 33:13, 274:24, 323:25, 352:23, 356:13</p> <p>basis [29] - 24:7, 31:1, 78:6, 80:1, 82:12, 95:5, 96:7, 96:25, 97:22, 111:13, 142:24, 183:12, 207:2, 226:3, 268:14, 272:1, 310:11, 317:14, 318:4, 319:9, 322:13, 323:10, 328:25, 349:24, 353:5, 354:2, 362:16, 364:24, 367:18</p> <p>bat [1] - 123:23</p> <p>bear [4] - 243:9, 320:18, 374:3, 374:4</p> <p>bearing [2] - 113:13, 356:4</p> <p>beast [1] - 20:23</p> <p>became [4] - 15:23, 119:22, 279:16, 280:5</p> <p>become [6] - 122:20, 138:13, 138:17, 198:15, 200:9, 282:8</p> <p>becomes [5] - 123:2, 123:9, 272:15, 296:6, 349:14</p> <p>BEFORE [1] - 1:22</p> <p>began [2] - 34:8, 95:13</p> <p>begin [4] - 16:10, 95:1, 348:12, 380:8</p> <p>beginning [6] - 18:11, 28:13, 47:20, 85:15, 193:1, 266:1</p> <p>begins [2] - 81:13, 286:19</p> <p>begs [3] - 315:13, 316:25, 317:10</p> <p>begun [1] - 182:13</p>	<p>behalf [7] - 16:13, 16:18, 17:4, 17:9, 23:5, 63:9, 198:19</p> <p>behavior [1] - 215:11</p> <p>behind [5] - 93:23, 182:25, 190:25, 196:8, 365:23</p> <p>behooves [1] - 20:8</p> <p>belief [2] - 65:11, 380:21</p> <p>believes [2] - 45:24, 192:4</p> <p>belong [1] - 148:11</p> <p>belonging [1] - 152:22</p> <p>below [6] - 36:1, 211:2, 289:16, 301:18, 366:15, 374:20</p> <p>benchmark [1] - 256:3</p> <p>benchmarking [1] - 255:23</p> <p>beneficial [2] - 368:4, 368:13</p> <p>benefit [20] - 34:3, 47:1, 76:10, 94:18, 129:21, 211:10, 211:13, 212:10, 225:2, 226:3, 226:12, 228:13, 238:19, 245:4, 257:11, 257:16, 257:25, 268:3, 269:25, 346:25</p> <p>benefited [2] - 33:2, 72:13</p> <p>benefits [20] - 13:11, 47:15, 60:3, 60:10, 94:21, 109:3, 113:22, 190:5, 212:14, 225:15, 226:16, 227:16, 239:20, 243:14, 243:20, 243:22, 243:24, 243:25, 267:25, 364:2</p> <p>benefitting [1] - 175:9</p> <p>best [40] - 55:5, 55:23, 66:24, 72:17, 96:22, 97:2, 97:12, 97:17, 98:13, 108:2, 116:9, 119:11, 122:25, 129:16, 135:20, 158:14, 159:4, 167:1, 182:2, 205:25, 206:1, 210:22, 228:20, 239:15, 252:3, 253:19, 263:10, 278:18, 311:16, 311:19, 311:21, 312:7, 323:20, 323:22, 328:15, 361:21, 361:23, 363:6, 375:12, 379:20</p> <p>better [42] - 21:23, 42:2, 68:15, 71:23, 75:23, 98:22, 102:1, 114:11, 114:12, 122:4, 128:2, 170:13, 172:2, 176:19, 182:17, 184:7, 186:9, 206:6, 278:12, 290:8, 291:9, 291:12, 291:16, 310:3, 318:3, 319:6, 323:23, 324:8, 329:11, 347:24, 351:14, 352:19, 353:5, 364:17, 365:6, 365:14, 365:15, 367:6, 367:7, 368:7, 370:13, 372:19</p>	<p>between [38] - 29:18, 36:25, 42:17, 71:22, 72:23, 84:23, 98:7, 109:13, 132:3, 158:3, 166:8, 180:5, 196:13, 216:3, 217:3, 218:11, 228:12, 233:19, 268:10, 269:5, 273:16, 322:1, 322:4, 327:8, 327:20, 328:2, 333:23, 333:25, 343:18, 345:9, 360:4, 366:12, 369:1, 369:17, 371:9, 372:6, 372:7, 372:22</p> <p>beyond [14] - 44:20, 46:14, 79:15, 80:3, 108:23, 113:14, 140:21, 140:22, 188:17, 200:17, 207:2, 239:25, 242:23, 279:25</p> <p>bidding [2] - 363:9</p> <p>big [24] - 81:8, 96:4, 96:15, 101:12, 102:6, 104:1, 105:1, 109:6, 115:15, 121:10, 121:11, 125:3, 128:17, 135:25, 136:7, 166:8, 192:8, 193:23, 196:9, 247:23, 252:9, 252:17, 350:23, 362:25</p> <p>bigger [2] - 65:6, 163:19</p> <p>biggest [2] - 316:13, 363:17</p> <p>Bill [1] - 146:24</p> <p>bill [6] - 49:22, 53:17, 53:19, 53:24, 64:14, 147:15</p> <p>billed [1] - 13:17</p> <p>billings [1] - 310:12</p> <p>bills [1] - 120:1</p> <p>Bismarck [4] - 1:18, 2:17, 2:23, 15:8</p> <p>bit [36] - 21:19, 45:22, 47:19, 80:13, 88:6, 122:7, 186:16, 189:9, 193:22, 199:16, 203:12, 205:12, 206:7, 232:1, 238:4, 238:11, 242:23, 255:9, 265:9, 288:16, 290:1, 322:14, 328:18, 331:23, 333:12, 335:8, 343:2, 348:3, 352:18, 353:20, 364:19, 364:22, 369:5, 375:18, 376:11, 376:23</p> <p>Black [13] - 54:2, 54:6, 55:8, 55:10, 63:6, 63:14, 63:17, 134:21, 134:22, 297:23, 298:9, 300:20, 302:7</p> <p>black [1] - 145:7</p> <p>blades [1] - 158:4</p> <p>blend [2] - 371:23, 372:22</p> <p>blended [1] - 280:11</p> <p>blends [1] - 372:5</p> <p>blocks [1] - 59:8</p> <p>blowing [5] - 111:16, 111:23,</p>	<p>136:2, 137:24, 138:9</p> <p>blue [1] - 38:2</p> <p>Blue [1] - 12:19</p> <p>Board [1] - 279:5</p> <p>board [1] - 147:25</p> <p>boards [1] - 205:17</p> <p>bodies [2] - 122:18, 123:10</p> <p>boils [1] - 112:12</p> <p>bombs [1] - 128:1</p> <p>bonding [1] - 294:24</p> <p>Bonds [1] - 12:20</p> <p>Bonny [1] - 16:7</p> <p>BONNY [1] - 1:22</p> <p>bonus [4] - 215:13, 244:9, 245:19, 246:1</p> <p>bonuses [1] - 36:2</p> <p>book [1] - 345:14</p> <p>books [4] - 288:2, 296:5, 302:11, 302:18</p> <p>boomers [1] - 182:4</p> <p>booming [1] - 130:5</p> <p>Border [3] - 90:16, 93:19, 93:25</p> <p>borrow [1] - 48:11</p> <p>boss [1] - 166:23</p> <p>bothered [1] - 22:15</p> <p>bottom [9] - 53:24, 63:23, 65:25, 68:3, 69:9, 69:13, 152:5, 285:17, 339:18</p> <p>Boulevard [2] - 2:17, 2:22</p> <p>bound [3] - 289:23, 315:18, 317:3</p> <p>bounded [1] - 372:11</p> <p>brain [1] - 100:24</p> <p>brand [1] - 109:16</p> <p>brand-new [1] - 109:16</p> <p>breaching [1] - 345:8</p> <p>break [18] - 26:24, 27:2, 27:6, 83:19, 83:24, 140:1, 141:13, 208:9, 223:9, 229:23, 233:5, 252:4, 252:16, 264:11, 264:12, 276:22, 277:2, 330:7</p> <p>breakdown [1] - 192:17</p> <p>breaking [1] - 27:4</p> <p>breaks [3] - 26:25, 192:12, 192:13</p> <p>BRIAN [1] - 2:3</p> <p>Brian [1] - 18:8</p> <p>Bridge [1] - 116:11</p> <p>brief [1] - 373:16</p> <p>briefly [7] - 30:2, 60:17, 73:4, 282:24, 282:25, 329:7, 374:18</p> <p>bring [16] - 59:14, 61:8, 106:23, 136:12, 184:19, 194:8, 194:16, 195:12, 196:3, 197:10, 284:8, 301:18, 302:3, 302:4, 315:20, 317:8</p>
--	---	--	---

<p>bringing [2] - 110:11, 185:19 brings [2] - 82:10, 301:16 brining [1] - 260:5 broad [8] - 45:16, 97:16, 100:19, 100:22, 148:12, 228:7, 271:7, 371:2 broadcasting [1] - 21:25 broader [4] - 220:17, 237:2, 244:2, 294:21 broadly [1] - 229:11 BROCKETT [2] - 4:13, 307:10 Brockett [29] - 10:3, 11:3, 31:20, 42:9, 73:7, 73:24, 306:1, 306:16, 306:18, 306:20, 306:21, 306:25, 307:15, 307:24, 312:16, 312:23, 330:14, 330:16, 331:12, 331:19, 332:3, 338:23, 338:25, 341:16, 342:4, 342:6, 350:19, 373:12, 377:18 Brockett's [2] - 326:19, 331:9 broken [1] - 230:11 Brookings [1] - 171:17 brought [7] - 73:25, 78:4, 79:12, 89:20, 89:21, 104:5, 116:24 Bruce [1] - 362:24 brush [1] - 371:2 bucks [1] - 361:10 budget [5] - 50:19, 80:10, 82:17, 164:8, 260:19 budgeting [3] - 80:16, 157:4, 164:10 budgets [6] - 81:12, 82:20, 156:20, 157:7, 249:3, 260:21 build [12] - 55:11, 76:5, 101:17, 102:18, 124:23, 135:12, 135:15, 135:16, 164:14, 165:2, 165:11, 315:4 build-out [3] - 124:23, 165:2, 165:11 build-outs [1] - 164:14 building [10] - 37:8, 59:7, 59:9, 59:13, 59:15, 59:17, 59:19, 60:1, 164:13, 283:24 buildings [4] - 32:21, 60:5, 269:14, 279:17 buildup [1] - 165:7 built [9] - 59:9, 85:11, 134:20, 136:23, 190:12, 292:11, 314:25, 315:2, 351:19 bulk [3] - 36:12, 41:8, 114:11 Bulkley [6] - 10:4, 10:6, 11:4,</p>	<p>34:17, 48:20, 306:2 BULKLEY [1] - 5:2 bunch [2] - 105:5, 340:21 burden [4] - 24:17, 50:5, 53:8, 53:9 burdening [1] - 32:17 buried [1] - 188:13 burning [1] - 60:24 business [70] - 19:2, 28:23, 48:11, 49:12, 50:13, 50:15, 50:18, 50:22, 51:19, 62:17, 62:18, 62:21, 64:9, 71:1, 80:18, 80:20, 81:11, 82:10, 95:24, 97:5, 104:16, 104:24, 113:17, 114:2, 114:3, 115:1, 115:23, 116:1, 121:5, 121:25, 126:17, 127:13, 139:7, 146:12, 148:13, 157:4, 161:17, 162:6, 164:2, 188:7, 192:14, 195:4, 196:18, 199:12, 211:9, 212:20, 213:10, 215:18, 216:5, 234:6, 234:7, 235:1, 237:23, 241:17, 241:18, 241:20, 246:22, 250:11, 251:17, 251:18, 252:7, 263:17, 279:22, 279:24, 280:4, 281:5, 284:6 businesses [2] - 34:12, 148:1 button [1] - 38:1 buy [3] - 105:13, 107:25, 111:2 buying [5] - 111:1, 111:7, 111:25, 114:3, 114:11 buys [1] - 111:4 BY [49] - 39:2, 45:12, 88:2, 100:17, 119:2, 129:14, 141:18, 145:23, 150:18, 156:9, 159:12, 161:10, 163:10, 166:21, 171:14, 173:17, 177:6, 188:2, 189:4, 197:8, 202:3, 203:10, 204:10, 209:18, 213:17, 231:17, 243:7, 249:24, 256:13, 257:5, 261:7, 262:2, 266:24, 271:19, 288:15, 292:2, 296:20, 304:5, 307:14, 312:22, 337:18, 348:15, 360:17, 366:7, 373:11, 377:17, 378:11, 380:11, 382:7</p>	<p>cables [1] - 162:8 calculate [1] - 227:17 calculated [5] - 69:19, 144:8, 144:9, 263:10, 286:10 calculation [4] - 222:9, 227:7, 244:15, 283:3 calculations [2] - 296:4, 384:12 calculator [1] - 327:22 calendar [2] - 13:17, 78:20 California [1] - 194:15 canceled [2] - 54:3, 54:8 candidates [2] - 183:24, 184:6 cannot [4] - 269:17, 309:17, 320:7, 366:1 cap [9] - 165:14, 165:16, 165:17, 212:1, 212:2, 235:12, 235:19, 262:7, 262:8 capable [1] - 210:16 capacity [11] - 174:25, 309:25, 315:12, 317:5, 318:2, 348:1, 349:9, 354:18, 354:19, 355:6, 381:18 capital [34] - 13:24, 18:25, 29:4, 34:14, 41:17, 41:18, 48:10, 48:11, 48:15, 48:23, 80:18, 84:21, 86:3, 89:19, 90:4, 90:22, 103:18, 103:20, 123:16, 125:9, 151:13, 156:20, 157:7, 163:15, 163:21, 164:4, 164:8, 164:16, 165:2, 258:15, 267:9, 337:8 capital-intensive [2] - 48:11, 80:18 Capitol [3] - 1:17, 15:7, 305:22 captured [2] - 351:14, 353:18 captures [4] - 309:7, 310:3, 355:15, 364:17 CapX [1] - 123:7 CapX2020 [5] - 46:12, 46:23, 54:4, 57:24, 58:11 carbon [1] - 174:20 carbon-free [1] - 174:20 card [1] - 116:22 cards [1] - 21:12 CARDWELL [1] - 8:7 Cardwell [3] - 12:5, 12:24, 17:6 cardwell [1] - 332:3 care [1] - 86:4 cared [1] - 379:11 career [3] - 186:6, 214:2, 217:20 carefully [1] - 148:9</p>	<p>Carlee [1] - 152:25 carried [1] - 85:9 carries [2] - 228:13, 272:8 carry [2] - 61:23, 280:1 carrying [1] - 167:21 case [136] - 16:22, 17:16, 20:18, 22:17, 25:1, 25:5, 25:8, 25:15, 25:16, 28:9, 28:13, 28:19, 29:4, 29:24, 31:9, 32:9, 33:8, 33:24, 34:21, 35:1, 35:18, 36:16, 36:23, 42:14, 44:2, 44:12, 44:20, 48:21, 48:22, 52:5, 52:6, 52:25, 53:5, 53:6, 59:4, 60:12, 71:9, 76:19, 79:2, 80:15, 85:20, 89:20, 89:21, 90:4, 90:24, 91:24, 92:2, 92:3, 92:7, 101:8, 102:9, 103:9, 103:10, 103:17, 104:6, 104:22, 105:4, 105:7, 105:10, 105:18, 105:25, 107:8, 107:12, 108:3, 109:7, 112:11, 112:15, 119:11, 123:4, 124:20, 128:24, 136:2, 140:4, 140:10, 141:22, 142:1, 142:2, 142:20, 151:5, 151:10, 158:16, 159:5, 163:17, 167:11, 168:19, 168:23, 173:22, 184:11, 188:15, 189:16, 192:17, 193:17, 204:19, 206:10, 206:13, 216:3, 219:9, 219:14, 219:18, 232:9, 232:10, 255:15, 261:19, 262:18, 306:14, 309:3, 309:7, 311:6, 312:15, 321:17, 321:18, 322:6, 325:2, 335:22, 336:3, 338:7, 342:23, 350:13, 351:18, 353:14, 356:15, 360:21, 362:1, 362:5, 363:22, 365:24, 367:6, 368:18, 374:25, 375:5, 375:6, 382:14, 382:22, 383:1, 384:13 Case [5] - 1:6, 15:15, 270:4, 342:11, 342:24 cases [23] - 18:18, 19:10, 21:3, 21:24, 31:1, 31:17, 50:10, 80:3, 89:23, 91:3, 91:5, 91:7, 91:21, 91:22, 92:2, 119:15, 119:24, 124:22, 287:11, 321:14, 321:17, 322:12, 367:19 cash [23] - 210:18, 210:23, 211:1, 211:15, 212:8, 214:24, 221:15, 221:24, 222:4, 222:7, 222:18,</p>
	C		
	<p>cable [4] - 65:10, 160:15, 160:17, 160:24 Cable [1] - 12:6</p>		

<p>223:3, 223:10, 223:17, 224:6, 225:9, 225:23, 226:11, 226:15, 244:21, 248:3, 263:19, 298:21</p> <p>cask [3] - 199:17, 200:15, 203:20</p> <p>categories [1] - 269:16</p> <p>category [2] - 196:12, 254:17</p> <p>causality [5] - 355:16, 356:12, 366:15, 366:18, 367:8</p> <p>causation [1] - 30:16</p> <p>caused [4] - 30:8, 99:20, 157:18, 381:17</p> <p>causes [2] - 68:19, 138:4</p> <p>causing [1] - 276:11</p> <p>caution [3] - 20:17, 47:25, 334:19</p> <p>ceased [1] - 55:25</p> <p>Center [1] - 2:11</p> <p>center [2] - 121:7, 123:3</p> <p>Central [8] - 15:5, 84:4, 141:6, 208:13, 264:16, 306:12, 341:22, 383:24</p> <p>centralized [2] - 121:7</p> <p>centrally [1] - 250:16</p> <p>Century [1] - 27:13</p> <p>certain [35] - 43:7, 43:23, 55:11, 75:21, 79:3, 79:8, 79:9, 88:6, 129:23, 131:19, 133:7, 134:25, 137:16, 140:22, 147:17, 148:6, 149:4, 149:8, 149:18, 178:11, 207:3, 211:13, 214:14, 215:6, 221:8, 225:16, 241:3, 244:17, 244:25, 247:6, 249:9, 292:17, 351:12, 359:24</p> <p>certainly [32] - 50:15, 62:18, 77:20, 85:12, 88:11, 97:8, 135:25, 147:23, 153:7, 160:21, 161:19, 163:1, 168:15, 168:16, 169:4, 176:1, 181:21, 199:10, 217:4, 217:6, 217:23, 227:19, 228:20, 230:23, 236:17, 236:18, 237:20, 277:11, 277:14, 316:24, 329:21, 338:21</p> <p>certainty [1] - 125:9</p> <p>cessation [1] - 33:11</p> <p>cetera [1] - 18:25</p> <p>chain [1] - 114:2</p> <p>Chair [2] - 28:14, 371:7</p> <p>chair [1] - 18:8</p> <p>Chairman [2] - 2:3, 93:18</p> <p>challenge [2] - 123:9, 237:23</p> <p>challenges [7] - 237:8, 237:13, 237:16, 254:1, 254:4, 254:10, 363:24</p>	<p>Chamber [10] - 12:9, 145:3, 146:3, 146:20, 146:25, 147:5, 147:9, 147:22, 148:2, 148:3</p> <p>chance [2] - 197:11, 208:10</p> <p>change [45] - 29:10, 30:18, 30:24, 31:3, 39:16, 42:7, 54:17, 54:18, 63:2, 72:12, 77:17, 85:23, 97:18, 97:23, 101:13, 123:22, 124:1, 128:25, 138:12, 163:1, 182:21, 189:15, 191:11, 191:16, 193:10, 203:23, 206:11, 249:12, 273:18, 273:21, 274:9, 274:13, 301:7, 301:8, 313:15, 313:17, 316:9, 322:22, 343:19, 343:20, 352:21, 352:22, 358:14, 364:22, 365:22</p> <p>changed [7] - 54:16, 113:1, 120:21, 135:7, 135:10, 316:3, 361:3</p> <p>changer [1] - 99:18</p> <p>changes [11] - 79:11, 157:10, 190:20, 191:9, 193:8, 206:9, 241:10, 268:17, 273:5, 311:4, 311:5</p> <p>changing [8] - 55:20, 79:10, 95:25, 123:11, 162:19, 175:17, 178:17, 358:19</p> <p>Chapter [2] - 27:14, 328:24</p> <p>characteristics [4] - 216:22, 368:2, 368:10, 369:1</p> <p>characterization [1] - 334:8</p> <p>characterize [6] - 108:2, 319:16, 323:7, 329:9, 336:22, 370:1</p> <p>charge [2] - 24:7, 120:19</p> <p>charges [1] - 24:1</p> <p>charitable [14] - 13:7, 75:17, 75:22, 75:25, 77:4, 77:11, 77:19, 130:18, 130:23, 131:11, 131:25, 132:10, 133:6, 133:22</p> <p>charities [1] - 77:1</p> <p>CHARLES [1] - 7:8</p> <p>Charles [2] - 11:22, 12:18</p> <p>chart [14] - 66:5, 69:18, 69:19, 100:2, 112:22, 130:20, 142:8, 165:21, 192:8, 192:11, 192:12, 192:24, 230:11, 331:8</p> <p>Chart [1] - 11:13</p> <p>charts [2] - 70:8, 222:5</p> <p>cheap [1] - 354:20</p> <p>cheaper [1] - 138:15</p> <p>cheapest [1] - 278:13</p> <p>check [11] - 74:1, 79:5, 106:25, 170:24, 218:11,</p>	<p>245:12, 317:21, 338:11, 347:13, 348:7, 350:14</p> <p>check-in [1] - 218:11</p> <p>checks [1] - 98:21</p> <p>chemicals [1] - 157:14</p> <p>Chief [1] - 174:12</p> <p>chilling [1] - 204:22</p> <p>Chip [1] - 12:19</p> <p>choice [3] - 33:16, 33:17, 217:12</p> <p>choices [3] - 95:1, 182:16, 183:20</p> <p>choose [4] - 162:24, 284:23, 289:14, 320:7</p> <p>choosing [1] - 337:25</p> <p>chose [3] - 178:13, 366:23, 368:18</p> <p>chosen [1] - 23:7</p> <p>Christmann [33] - 3:8, 3:19, 4:5, 4:12, 4:17, 5:6, 5:10, 5:14, 5:22, 6:9, 6:13, 6:18, 6:24, 7:6, 7:11, 7:18, 7:21, 8:5, 18:9, 22:10, 23:13, 129:10, 145:25, 146:10, 154:11, 171:3, 201:24, 203:6, 204:6, 256:11, 296:16, 366:5, 383:9</p> <p>CHRISTMANN [24] - 2:4, 22:11, 129:11, 129:14, 133:16, 134:17, 139:12, 139:17, 154:12, 171:4, 201:25, 202:3, 203:2, 204:7, 256:13, 256:22, 296:17, 296:20, 297:11, 303:23, 366:7, 371:21, 373:3, 383:10</p> <p>Chronology [1] - 14:4</p> <p>chronology [1] - 322:6</p> <p>chunk [1] - 104:1</p> <p>chute [1] - 119:19</p> <p>circumstances [13] - 42:4, 44:18, 48:22, 54:16, 97:15, 97:16, 98:17, 98:22, 206:1, 330:2, 353:11, 353:20, 355:23</p> <p>citation [8] - 313:24, 319:5, 325:22, 326:3, 330:24, 331:3, 338:6, 342:9</p> <p>citations [1] - 342:10</p> <p>citizen [1] - 22:19</p> <p>citizens [1] - 76:4</p> <p>City [1] - 12:12</p> <p>clarification [4] - 143:10, 145:24, 232:2, 252:10</p> <p>clarify [5] - 150:19, 223:7, 227:8, 250:8, 320:21</p> <p>clarifying [2] - 260:3, 375:22</p> <p>Clark [1] - 153:19</p> <p>Class [2] - 37:19, 266:7</p> <p>class [5] - 13:16, 229:20,</p>	<p>229:21, 230:5</p> <p>classes [6] - 229:19, 229:24, 230:16, 313:5, 313:11, 350:24</p> <p>clause [5] - 43:10, 43:14, 43:20, 44:23, 53:3</p> <p>clean [12] - 47:6, 64:17, 117:8, 117:22, 118:4, 119:20, 174:17, 191:21, 192:2, 280:20, 298:4, 301:11</p> <p>cleaner [1] - 118:11</p> <p>cleaning [1] - 119:25</p> <p>clear [10] - 228:14, 242:3, 245:22, 260:7, 279:14, 281:11, 281:16, 336:8, 347:3, 376:24</p> <p>clearly [3] - 50:11, 190:2, 229:2</p> <p>climate [1] - 148:14</p> <p>clock [1] - 174:20</p> <p>close [2] - 142:9, 197:11</p> <p>closed [1] - 92:12</p> <p>Co [1] - 250:24</p> <p>coal [19] - 60:22, 60:24, 111:19, 116:12, 135:22, 136:5, 136:6, 136:7, 136:14, 136:19, 137:5, 137:16, 138:4, 138:6, 138:10, 138:11, 138:15, 157:15, 164:25</p> <p>coal-burning [1] - 60:24</p> <p>coal-fired [2] - 111:19, 136:19</p> <p>coal-fueled [1] - 60:22</p> <p>Code [1] - 27:13</p> <p>code [1] - 202:16</p> <p>coincidence [1] - 358:7</p> <p>coincident [10] - 310:9, 312:1, 313:1, 313:12, 350:16, 350:17, 351:25, 355:1, 378:16</p> <p>coincidental [3] - 73:4, 313:7, 313:9</p> <p>coined [1] - 290:10</p> <p>Coke [1] - 254:25</p> <p>colleagues [1] - 227:15</p> <p>collect [10] - 88:17, 88:18, 88:19, 88:21, 325:13, 357:12, 357:19, 358:22, 358:23, 359:5</p> <p>collected [2] - 281:20, 290:21</p> <p>collecting [5] - 32:14, 290:11, 358:12, 358:16, 358:17</p> <p>collection [2] - 88:20, 357:5</p> <p>collective [1] - 349:7</p> <p>college [1] - 214:3</p> <p>Colorado [2] - 52:22, 114:10</p>
--	---	--	--

<p>column [5] - 164:7, 298:3, 300:13, 302:19, 331:10</p> <p>combination [6] - 98:9, 98:10, 185:25, 194:6, 210:19, 213:5</p> <p>combinations [1] - 206:20</p> <p>combined [11] - 55:13, 105:15, 134:19, 135:11, 136:25, 319:2, 319:4, 319:7, 319:9, 319:17, 351:3</p> <p>comfortable [4] - 116:2, 184:20, 191:6, 332:20</p> <p>coming [31] - 21:14, 54:23, 56:7, 61:3, 96:11, 103:16, 109:5, 109:15, 110:1, 111:22, 112:16, 119:13, 119:18, 125:8, 125:12, 125:13, 127:13, 179:13, 183:24, 188:20, 189:20, 190:7, 193:24, 194:3, 206:14, 213:23, 247:10, 251:17, 261:16, 343:13, 358:1</p> <p>Comission [1] - 29:22</p> <p>commencing [1] - 15:2</p> <p>commensurate [1] - 48:7</p> <p>comment [9] - 86:19, 125:16, 153:5, 160:20, 164:21, 199:3, 204:12, 254:20, 255:9</p> <p>comments [7] - 18:10, 19:17, 38:10, 189:5, 250:9, 250:18, 363:3</p> <p>Commerce [7] - 12:9, 146:3, 146:20, 146:25, 147:6, 147:10, 147:22</p> <p>Commerce's [1] - 145:3</p> <p>Commission [139] - 2:16, 2:22, 15:7, 15:19, 16:2, 16:4, 17:5, 17:8, 17:15, 17:16, 18:7, 18:8, 19:25, 24:19, 24:23, 25:9, 28:21, 29:11, 29:16, 30:6, 30:23, 30:24, 30:25, 31:7, 31:11, 33:15, 35:22, 40:7, 40:12, 40:13, 41:12, 41:19, 42:5, 42:16, 42:20, 43:12, 43:18, 44:22, 53:8, 60:18, 67:17, 72:12, 73:3, 74:6, 74:12, 75:6, 85:11, 87:1, 87:13, 89:5, 89:13, 100:13, 104:10, 104:20, 107:2, 116:6, 123:5, 123:24, 126:20, 143:6, 144:9, 147:14, 148:25, 151:8, 153:18, 153:23, 154:23, 157:17, 163:7, 167:12, 175:5, 175:21, 183:10, 189:1, 190:3, 197:22,</p>	<p>198:17, 198:24, 199:12, 199:22, 201:8, 203:12, 204:13, 219:2, 227:21, 232:5, 233:13, 233:16, 243:4, 270:6, 270:8, 270:19, 282:2, 288:12, 290:14, 293:5, 294:12, 294:23, 295:1, 308:3, 308:7, 308:21, 310:13, 310:19, 310:20, 311:14, 312:8, 312:12, 312:25, 313:15, 313:17, 320:21, 320:23, 320:24, 321:6, 321:9, 321:11, 321:18, 332:5, 337:25, 339:7, 339:16, 339:19, 340:13, 343:3, 343:20, 344:19, 348:12, 356:8, 358:13, 361:7, 362:18, 362:21, 382:13, 382:20, 383:5</p> <p>COMMISSION [4] - 1:3, 2:18, 2:24, 11:17</p> <p>commission [8] - 53:7, 85:19, 340:23, 357:13, 357:15, 357:17, 367:20, 371:13</p> <p>Commission's [15] - 17:1, 17:13, 34:25, 42:13, 42:25, 44:4, 44:17, 74:23, 75:2, 309:1, 309:4, 311:1, 311:10, 311:16, 337:22</p> <p>Commissioner [134] - 3:7, 3:7, 3:8, 3:9, 3:13, 3:13, 3:18, 3:18, 3:19, 3:19, 4:4, 4:5, 4:5, 4:7, 4:11, 4:11, 4:12, 4:16, 4:17, 4:17, 4:20, 4:21, 5:5, 5:5, 5:6, 5:8, 5:9, 5:13, 5:14, 5:14, 5:16, 5:21, 5:21, 5:22, 6:8, 6:9, 6:11, 6:12, 6:13, 6:17, 6:17, 6:18, 6:23, 6:23, 6:24, 6:24, 7:5, 7:10, 7:10, 7:11, 7:13, 7:17, 7:18, 7:18, 7:21, 8:4, 8:5, 8:5, 8:10, 8:10, 13:23, 18:11, 19:13, 19:14, 19:16, 20:9, 22:9, 22:10, 23:5, 23:12, 38:7, 100:13, 101:10, 108:18, 112:20, 116:5, 118:21, 118:22, 124:6, 125:17, 128:9, 129:9, 129:10, 129:18, 130:10, 133:14, 135:3, 139:13, 140:9, 145:25, 146:10, 150:10, 151:11, 151:17, 154:3, 163:8, 166:17, 166:18, 171:2, 171:3, 189:1, 195:15, 197:4, 201:23, 201:24, 203:4, 203:6, 203:8, 204:5, 229:14, 230:14, 249:20,</p>	<p>253:1, 256:9, 291:23, 291:24, 292:10, 296:14, 340:16, 341:5, 343:20, 348:13, 360:14, 360:24, 362:24, 362:25, 366:4, 366:5, 368:12, 369:18, 373:5, 380:9, 382:2, 383:9</p> <p>commissioner [13] - 150:8, 152:3, 154:11, 197:5, 199:1, 243:5, 249:21, 256:11, 261:24, 288:13, 294:10, 294:20, 296:16</p> <p>COMMISSIONER [106] - 2:3, 2:3, 2:4, 18:13, 19:15, 22:11, 38:9, 65:6, 93:16, 93:19, 94:5, 94:9, 94:13, 100:15, 100:17, 118:19, 118:23, 119:2, 129:7, 129:11, 129:14, 133:16, 134:17, 139:12, 139:17, 150:9, 150:12, 150:18, 154:9, 154:12, 163:10, 166:15, 166:19, 166:21, 168:21, 169:10, 169:14, 170:7, 170:8, 170:25, 171:4, 189:4, 197:2, 197:6, 197:8, 201:21, 201:25, 202:3, 203:2, 203:5, 203:10, 204:2, 204:7, 229:15, 243:7, 249:17, 249:22, 249:24, 252:23, 253:4, 253:6, 256:6, 256:13, 256:22, 262:2, 263:23, 288:15, 290:24, 291:18, 291:21, 291:25, 292:2, 294:19, 296:13, 296:17, 296:20, 297:8, 297:11, 303:23, 306:6, 321:2, 326:13, 326:17, 326:21, 340:14, 340:17, 343:25, 348:15, 350:22, 360:11, 360:15, 360:17, 366:2, 366:7, 371:21, 373:3, 380:5, 380:7, 380:11, 381:25, 382:3, 382:7, 383:3, 383:10, 384:3, 384:7</p> <p>commissioners [3] - 343:25, 344:2, 380:3</p> <p>Commissioners [26] - 16:12, 17:4, 25:2, 26:15, 27:1, 28:15, 40:6, 139:22, 141:16, 141:21, 150:7, 153:19, 155:21, 159:2, 172:11, 179:14, 179:16, 190:17, 208:2, 251:14, 259:24, 261:23, 264:2, 305:14, 343:23, 384:1</p> <p>COMMISSIONERS [1] - 2:2</p> <p>Commissions [3] - 280:8,</p>	<p>287:23, 290:19</p> <p>commissions [11] - 56:14, 58:11, 71:3, 314:15, 318:12, 322:22, 329:5, 358:11, 361:11, 363:23</p> <p>commit [2] - 44:5, 168:16</p> <p>commitment [1] - 96:15</p> <p>commitments [3] - 42:19, 42:24, 158:17</p> <p>common [4] - 272:11, 273:4, 279:11</p> <p>commonality [4] - 85:25, 86:6, 86:12, 148:12</p> <p>commonly [3] - 325:20, 326:1, 337:3</p> <p>communicate [1] - 149:14</p> <p>communities [6] - 76:2, 76:4, 77:6, 77:8, 77:25</p> <p>communities' [1] - 77:10</p> <p>community [5] - 76:5, 76:6, 120:16, 125:24, 133:9</p> <p>comp [1] - 35:20</p> <p>compact [9] - 36:25, 72:18, 73:1, 84:16, 85:8, 86:9, 355:20, 371:16, 371:20</p> <p>companies [29] - 52:21, 114:7, 115:4, 121:9, 125:7, 128:6, 133:3, 153:12, 214:4, 214:11, 215:2, 215:24, 216:8, 218:20, 240:24, 241:8, 242:10, 242:16, 254:21, 254:22, 254:23, 254:25, 255:3, 255:14, 255:23, 256:1, 278:20, 281:14, 370:5</p> <p>Company [11] - 1:6, 11:11, 12:13, 15:10, 28:17, 40:9, 153:8, 282:3, 286:24, 294:13, 319:11</p> <p>company [208] - 18:23, 19:24, 20:14, 21:20, 22:25, 29:11, 30:22, 32:6, 32:19, 33:9, 33:19, 34:16, 36:14, 36:25, 37:1, 37:24, 38:10, 42:8, 43:1, 44:20, 45:19, 45:20, 45:24, 48:24, 50:8, 51:4, 51:6, 51:10, 51:12, 51:24, 52:1, 52:3, 52:19, 53:4, 53:10, 54:1, 56:11, 57:2, 57:9, 58:23, 58:24, 63:8, 63:11, 63:24, 67:3, 67:5, 68:23, 71:15, 72:8, 72:9, 72:11, 72:13, 72:14, 72:21, 72:23, 73:8, 73:16, 78:6, 78:7, 79:21, 80:6, 84:13, 84:17, 84:20, 84:23, 84:24, 85:2, 85:20, 86:5, 86:24, 96:8, 98:3, 101:4, 102:2, 104:20, 105:8, 106:2, 110:11, 110:15,</p>
---	---	--	---

<p>112:12, 113:7, 116:3, 117:13, 118:10, 121:16, 122:12, 122:13, 122:14, 122:16, 126:13, 130:25, 131:16, 132:16, 143:11, 144:14, 146:5, 149:2, 149:5, 149:18, 152:13, 152:17, 152:19, 153:22, 155:5, 169:1, 169:6, 169:8, 172:14, 174:14, 174:21, 184:16, 184:19, 184:22, 185:1, 185:3, 185:15, 186:11, 192:4, 201:7, 210:13, 212:23, 213:20, 213:22, 213:23, 214:25, 216:3, 224:9, 224:11, 225:7, 225:14, 231:20, 233:20, 235:9, 238:22, 238:25, 239:15, 240:4, 240:7, 240:9, 240:12, 240:16, 240:21, 241:15, 242:5, 246:7, 246:13, 248:9, 250:3, 250:13, 250:19, 250:20, 250:25, 251:3, 251:9, 252:1, 252:2, 252:6, 253:8, 253:11, 253:14, 255:11, 255:16, 258:1, 258:23, 259:7, 260:5, 261:12, 263:12, 264:23, 268:9, 268:14, 268:24, 269:10, 270:10, 270:22, 270:23, 272:1, 273:23, 278:11, 281:8, 283:20, 286:9, 295:13, 304:24, 308:13, 310:5, 314:23, 315:3, 316:14, 318:8, 324:13, 341:1, 344:14, 346:2, 348:25, 349:6, 367:12, 367:16, 368:6, 369:19, 369:22, 371:3, 379:21, 384:11</p> <p>company's [29] - 30:14, 30:20, 32:7, 32:9, 33:23, 34:21, 36:13, 48:4, 57:16, 63:25, 140:4, 140:10, 144:2, 149:3, 177:8, 181:1, 210:5, 234:19, 243:15, 270:12, 310:22, 310:24, 316:8, 319:23, 323:24, 324:3, 324:17, 356:24, 384:13</p> <p>companywide [1] - 100:23</p> <p>comparable [6] - 59:25, 131:6, 142:14, 211:3, 214:24, 224:17</p> <p>compare [7] - 36:18, 113:20, 210:22, 214:7, 215:2, 218:22, 323:8</p> <p>compared [9] - 69:24, 95:21, 204:24, 207:16, 223:24,</p>	<p>244:8, 261:12, 368:24, 375:19</p> <p>compares [2] - 67:4, 218:19</p> <p>comparing [3] - 95:20, 204:25, 255:18</p> <p>comparison [2] - 67:4, 69:5</p> <p>comparisons [1] - 67:7</p> <p>compensate [2] - 211:20, 248:7</p> <p>compensated [2] - 127:24, 258:25</p> <p>compensation [91] - 13:10, 35:21, 35:25, 36:5, 51:9, 51:17, 51:21, 51:22, 74:3, 74:5, 74:13, 74:21, 74:22, 113:22, 142:23, 149:11, 162:18, 163:3, 188:21, 210:18, 210:20, 210:23, 211:2, 211:7, 211:11, 211:12, 211:16, 211:19, 211:22, 212:4, 212:9, 213:25, 214:12, 214:22, 214:24, 215:4, 215:5, 216:20, 217:2, 217:11, 217:18, 220:10, 220:14, 222:4, 222:7, 222:11, 222:18, 222:19, 223:1, 223:3, 223:11, 223:18, 224:3, 224:6, 224:20, 225:1, 225:9, 225:22, 225:23, 226:11, 226:15, 236:9, 239:6, 242:11, 242:23, 242:24, 243:13, 243:18, 244:2, 244:7, 244:21, 246:12, 246:17, 247:5, 247:16, 247:24, 248:3, 250:15, 250:17, 250:22, 251:3, 251:4, 252:6, 252:12, 255:4, 255:13, 256:20, 262:10, 262:25, 263:19, 360:20</p> <p>Compensation [1] - 210:2</p> <p>compete [3] - 36:5, 212:25, 214:25</p> <p>competing [1] - 49:1</p> <p>competition [3] - 176:13, 182:17, 183:3</p> <p>competitive [10] - 51:13, 51:16, 107:20, 125:25, 191:20, 210:20, 225:9, 239:13, 248:2, 263:18</p> <p>competitively [1] - 223:16</p> <p>competitiveness [2] - 51:23, 183:2</p> <p>compile [1] - 230:21</p> <p>compiled [1] - 228:4</p> <p>complete [11] - 25:5, 43:16, 46:10, 53:14, 91:10, 103:11, 104:4, 104:6, 140:3, 140:4, 227:20</p>	<p>completed [5] - 46:17, 158:7, 158:18, 161:4, 201:18</p> <p>completely [4] - 124:14, 353:19, 365:24, 369:24</p> <p>completing [2] - 54:19, 108:19</p> <p>completion [4] - 24:25, 25:7, 25:15, 46:6</p> <p>complex [6] - 69:3, 122:1, 137:22, 213:9, 229:23, 230:8</p> <p>complexities [1] - 254:3</p> <p>complexity [1] - 228:17</p> <p>compliance [5] - 65:15, 81:19, 100:2, 175:19, 308:1</p> <p>compliance-driven [1] - 175:19</p> <p>complicated [7] - 138:3, 227:7, 295:13, 297:15, 300:19, 301:20, 381:20</p> <p>complying [1] - 42:19</p> <p>component [11] - 35:24, 149:3, 215:19, 215:22, 215:23, 221:16, 234:9, 243:18, 247:23, 281:17, 347:7</p> <p>components [7] - 192:17, 201:10, 223:15, 269:13, 293:17, 293:18, 365:3</p> <p>comports [1] - 77:24</p> <p>comprehensive [1] - 157:6</p> <p>comprise [1] - 172:8</p> <p>compromising [1] - 64:11</p> <p>computer [2] - 196:22, 201:15</p> <p>concentrate [1] - 373:22</p> <p>concept [2] - 96:5, 135:5</p> <p>conceptual [2] - 323:10, 346:23</p> <p>conceptually [1] - 372:14</p> <p>concern [7] - 49:5, 49:23, 103:6, 186:14, 205:20, 318:18, 353:8</p> <p>concerned [6] - 29:8, 41:24, 93:22, 186:12, 210:15, 211:18</p> <p>concerning [4] - 24:10, 27:18, 268:6, 304:7</p> <p>concerns [15] - 42:15, 42:25, 44:4, 49:8, 49:9, 49:11, 77:21, 123:6, 123:7, 126:9, 128:1, 207:15, 219:17, 368:6, 371:13</p> <p>concert [1] - 320:12</p> <p>concessions [1] - 202:21</p> <p>conclude [5] - 55:5, 135:19, 249:4, 336:16, 376:12</p> <p>concluded [1] - 46:24</p> <p>concludes [2] - 197:3,</p>	<p>249:18</p> <p>concluding [1] - 106:10</p> <p>conclusion [5] - 27:9, 271:11, 335:1, 368:11, 368:12</p> <p>conclusions [2] - 342:12, 342:25</p> <p>condensed [2] - 104:21, 230:13</p> <p>condition [2] - 178:25, 179:1</p> <p>conditions [10] - 34:15, 34:19, 79:10, 95:25, 97:23, 137:4, 207:15, 329:8, 334:21, 381:14</p> <p>conduct [3] - 238:15, 239:7, 249:6</p> <p>conducted [2] - 218:18, 321:14</p> <p>conducting [2] - 242:18, 249:15</p> <p>conductor [2] - 277:10, 277:12</p> <p>confer [1] - 324:19</p> <p>conference [2] - 24:12, 26:13</p> <p>confidence [2] - 128:15, 140:3</p> <p>confirmed [1] - 321:18</p> <p>confronted [1] - 367:4</p> <p>confused [1] - 338:9</p> <p>confusing [3] - 91:12, 251:14, 297:16</p> <p>confusion [1] - 91:13</p> <p>Congress [1] - 199:18</p> <p>connect [3] - 47:13, 58:18, 253:23</p> <p>connected [1] - 221:19</p> <p>connection [1] - 219:10</p> <p>connections [1] - 158:3</p> <p>connects [1] - 102:22</p> <p>consecutive [3] - 34:23, 35:7, 35:8</p> <p>consequence [2] - 32:16, 207:9</p> <p>consequences [4] - 49:24, 109:1, 109:4, 182:8</p> <p>conserve [1] - 50:6</p> <p>consider [9] - 31:21, 125:22, 169:4, 248:2, 248:5, 314:15, 317:11, 329:6, 360:10</p> <p>consideration [2] - 35:16, 311:3</p> <p>considerations [2] - 329:16, 355:11</p> <p>considered [6] - 23:14, 289:20, 320:2, 329:19, 337:10, 367:3</p> <p>considering [2] - 253:11, 380:24</p>
---	---	---	--

<p>considers [2] - 309:13, 317:23</p> <p>consistency [10] - 308:24, 311:11, 342:17, 355:19, 366:10, 366:12, 366:14, 366:19, 367:7, 369:16</p> <p>consistent [19] - 29:14, 32:8, 34:11, 34:24, 36:20, 36:24, 42:3, 42:12, 44:16, 75:3, 210:17, 224:1, 265:10, 268:21, 312:10, 325:11, 357:21, 359:1, 359:4</p> <p>consistently [4] - 30:9, 31:14, 321:10, 321:11</p> <p>consolidate [1] - 115:2</p> <p>consolidated [2] - 349:24, 364:24</p> <p>consolidation [1] - 121:6</p> <p>constant [7] - 50:21, 131:4, 131:21, 182:18, 186:23, 327:1</p> <p>constantly [1] - 96:1</p> <p>constituents [1] - 124:15</p> <p>construct [2] - 221:2, 239:12</p> <p>construed [2] - 320:17, 371:19</p> <p>consultant [6] - 33:5, 308:8, 311:6, 311:17, 312:11, 343:3</p> <p>consultants [7] - 29:2, 29:20, 36:11, 36:19, 40:7, 41:6, 43:4</p> <p>consultants' [3] - 29:9, 41:5, 41:25</p> <p>consulting [1] - 62:23</p> <p>consumables [1] - 116:19</p> <p>consumers [3] - 63:9, 117:8, 368:14</p> <p>contaminants [2] - 301:1</p> <p>contention [2] - 251:11, 315:24</p> <p>contentions [1] - 79:18</p> <p>context [4] - 314:13, 319:7, 322:24, 343:11</p> <p>contingencies [1] - 377:5</p> <p>contingent [1] - 260:4</p> <p>continual [1] - 218:10</p> <p>continually [2] - 98:16, 240:7</p> <p>continuation [3] - 30:5, 103:22, 106:9</p> <p>continue [25] - 30:19, 42:23, 46:4, 47:11, 48:1, 64:17, 84:5, 102:16, 103:14, 106:8, 122:19, 122:21, 141:7, 199:23, 200:4, 210:17, 218:9, 218:15, 221:11, 225:6, 296:9, 306:14, 308:3, 309:2, 332:25</p> <p>Continued [11] - 4:1, 5:1,</p>	<p>6:1, 7:1, 8:1, 9:1, 10:1, 11:1, 12:1, 13:1, 14:1</p> <p>continued [4] - 28:24, 30:1, 44:21, 325:6</p> <p>continues [5] - 33:17, 97:24, 158:14, 174:14, 175:18</p> <p>continuing [5] - 54:25, 59:25, 63:23, 82:4, 129:5</p> <p>CONTINUING [36] - 48:3, 65:12, 65:24, 67:24, 71:15, 84:8, 94:16, 133:16, 134:17, 152:3, 159:19, 169:10, 170:8, 181:24, 184:15, 231:3, 233:9, 236:7, 253:6, 272:22, 282:21, 290:24, 294:20, 297:11, 321:7, 324:21, 326:25, 330:17, 331:12, 333:2, 333:21, 339:3, 342:19, 344:9, 350:22, 371:21</p> <p>continuity [2] - 221:13, 221:17</p> <p>continuous [2] - 156:24, 191:25</p> <p>contract [2] - 289:12, 289:14</p> <p>contractions [1] - 131:5</p> <p>contracts [3] - 107:18, 109:17, 289:10</p> <p>contractual [1] - 289:19</p> <p>contrary [2] - 35:5, 35:10</p> <p>contrast [7] - 29:19, 31:25, 32:13, 34:16, 35:2, 285:4, 312:11</p> <p>contribute [5] - 77:4, 309:14, 309:24, 346:20, 351:7</p> <p>contributed [1] - 176:15</p> <p>contributing [3] - 130:24, 316:8, 348:19</p> <p>contribution [6] - 75:22, 112:23, 133:21, 259:18, 259:22, 349:22</p> <p>contributions [14] - 13:7, 75:17, 75:25, 76:1, 77:4, 77:19, 130:19, 131:11, 131:12, 132:1, 132:10, 133:20, 313:5, 313:12</p> <p>contributor [2] - 76:20, 245:7</p> <p>control [6] - 49:22, 58:24, 205:24, 206:3, 206:4, 227:13</p> <p>controlling [1] - 287:23</p> <p>convenience [4] - 23:17, 23:21, 23:24, 24:4</p> <p>conversant [1] - 149:21</p> <p>conversation [2] - 116:6, 220:5</p> <p>conversions [1] - 193:21</p> <p>converted [2] - 116:13,</p>	<p>136:23</p> <p>converts [1] - 193:9</p> <p>cool [1] - 353:15</p> <p>cooler [1] - 352:3</p> <p>cooperative [1] - 44:21</p> <p>coordinated [2] - 221:20, 260:24</p> <p>copies [9] - 38:12, 145:8, 173:19, 173:21, 338:16, 339:19, 340:1, 340:4, 343:22</p> <p>copper [1] - 278:22</p> <p>copy [5] - 65:1, 145:8, 282:5, 282:12, 341:3</p> <p>core [2] - 80:18, 80:22</p> <p>corner [3] - 62:24, 69:10, 69:13</p> <p>corporate [17] - 58:25, 59:1, 59:5, 59:10, 59:11, 76:4, 82:11, 82:12, 214:2, 215:17, 217:15, 233:25, 234:6, 234:21, 234:25, 235:4, 257:8</p> <p>Corporation [1] - 251:13</p> <p>corporations [2] - 211:7, 214:1</p> <p>correct [75] - 39:14, 52:2, 56:13, 66:1, 66:2, 67:5, 71:17, 72:22, 89:3, 90:20, 98:16, 101:7, 105:3, 108:12, 108:17, 108:18, 120:13, 130:1, 130:2, 132:19, 135:3, 145:12, 146:8, 146:9, 146:13, 146:20, 146:21, 150:22, 165:24, 178:5, 178:6, 179:5, 181:4, 188:19, 219:23, 223:5, 227:11, 235:22, 240:9, 255:4, 260:12, 264:20, 267:4, 272:5, 272:6, 274:4, 274:19, 274:20, 274:23, 274:24, 282:6, 285:20, 285:21, 289:9, 292:14, 297:25, 298:5, 299:6, 300:15, 306:17, 307:20, 314:11, 325:21, 329:20, 330:23, 331:2, 334:6, 346:3, 348:8, 348:20, 365:20, 367:16, 375:3, 379:8</p> <p>correction [1] - 39:18</p> <p>corrections [13] - 11:16, 12:25, 39:5, 39:9, 39:10, 39:25, 98:21, 156:14, 173:23, 174:4, 209:21, 267:3, 307:18</p> <p>correctly [5] - 104:7, 142:7, 192:15, 220:19, 223:6</p> <p>correlation [1] - 217:3</p>	<p>corresponding [1] - 341:16</p> <p>corrosion [1] - 62:11</p> <p>cost [231] - 13:11, 28:25, 30:8, 30:12, 30:16, 30:22, 32:2, 32:10, 32:17, 33:8, 33:10, 33:12, 33:21, 33:22, 33:25, 34:2, 34:4, 41:10, 41:13, 41:15, 41:20, 43:1, 43:7, 53:3, 53:21, 54:25, 55:2, 55:21, 55:24, 56:22, 57:13, 58:4, 59:25, 60:13, 61:23, 62:18, 62:21, 63:3, 63:5, 64:12, 69:6, 72:19, 89:7, 94:18, 95:19, 95:21, 103:12, 103:14, 103:20, 103:23, 103:25, 104:12, 104:15, 104:16, 106:6, 106:7, 107:19, 107:20, 109:21, 110:4, 110:6, 110:11, 110:12, 110:13, 111:20, 113:8, 113:18, 114:6, 115:9, 115:10, 115:22, 115:23, 116:10, 116:14, 116:24, 118:5, 121:20, 123:8, 126:16, 126:18, 128:16, 128:23, 129:5, 135:15, 135:18, 137:13, 138:12, 138:25, 150:20, 161:20, 162:4, 162:9, 167:7, 171:16, 175:2, 188:15, 190:4, 191:19, 192:9, 192:14, 193:13, 193:25, 211:10, 211:15, 211:22, 212:6, 222:3, 224:16, 224:23, 225:13, 226:16, 230:4, 238:19, 238:23, 240:15, 245:23, 247:20, 261:10, 263:17, 263:20, 267:15, 267:23, 268:17, 269:2, 270:25, 271:2, 271:5, 271:7, 273:15, 274:23, 275:15, 276:5, 277:18, 278:17, 284:14, 284:21, 289:4, 291:10, 291:14, 292:12, 292:25, 293:13, 298:3, 298:11, 299:7, 301:3, 301:16, 301:17, 301:21, 302:9, 302:10, 302:11, 302:12, 302:14, 302:15, 302:17, 303:8, 308:18, 309:21, 310:4, 313:4, 313:10, 313:23, 315:11, 316:1, 319:22, 319:24, 320:8, 320:10, 323:17, 324:3, 324:5, 324:17, 325:14, 328:8, 335:21, 337:1, 337:5, 337:7, 337:8, 337:9, 342:16, 343:10, 348:1, 348:17, 349:19, 353:23,</p>
--	--	--	--

<p>354:10, 354:16, 355:15, 355:21, 355:22, 356:2, 356:4, 356:12, 356:21, 358:6, 358:9, 358:13, 358:15, 358:17, 358:21, 358:22, 359:6, 359:17, 359:20, 361:1, 361:5, 361:16, 362:4, 362:12, 362:15, 362:19, 364:22, 366:15, 366:18, 367:8, 371:14, 371:18, 373:25, 374:2, 374:5, 374:6, 374:12, 376:9, 377:20, 380:20</p> <p>cost-effective [7] - 28:25, 55:24, 64:12, 116:14, 121:20, 135:15, 137:13</p> <p>cost-per [1] - 162:4</p> <p>cost-smoothing [1] - 41:15</p> <p>costing [1] - 345:16</p> <p>costly [4] - 48:12, 55:3, 55:18, 115:19</p> <p>costs [190] - 19:6, 29:3, 29:17, 32:23, 32:25, 34:23, 36:22, 43:4, 43:7, 43:9, 43:14, 43:19, 43:23, 46:3, 46:18, 49:19, 50:7, 50:9, 50:12, 50:14, 50:22, 50:23, 51:7, 53:10, 54:1, 54:5, 54:19, 54:22, 56:21, 56:25, 58:8, 58:24, 59:3, 62:4, 62:5, 62:16, 69:3, 69:24, 70:2, 70:21, 70:25, 71:16, 71:19, 72:21, 75:8, 76:9, 76:11, 76:16, 76:18, 76:23, 80:11, 80:14, 82:16, 83:1, 84:18, 88:6, 88:7, 89:9, 89:12, 94:22, 105:10, 105:17, 105:18, 105:25, 107:19, 108:1, 113:12, 113:14, 115:5, 117:3, 120:24, 126:10, 126:20, 127:18, 127:20, 130:16, 135:12, 135:16, 146:7, 154:7, 157:14, 158:22, 175:6, 175:12, 175:13, 191:1, 191:14, 193:24, 202:11, 210:6, 211:13, 211:19, 211:23, 211:25, 212:1, 212:3, 212:15, 212:16, 213:8, 225:2, 225:13, 225:20, 225:24, 226:3, 226:12, 228:13, 229:7, 229:11, 244:4, 244:5, 244:7, 247:16, 261:18, 262:8, 262:9, 262:21, 262:24, 263:14, 268:1, 268:3, 269:24, 270:23, 270:24, 272:12, 275:3, 279:8, 279:9,</p>	<p>293:19, 295:11, 299:23, 302:4, 302:6, 304:8, 304:12, 305:3, 308:5, 308:23, 309:8, 309:9, 309:11, 309:15, 309:16, 309:17, 310:22, 310:23, 311:25, 314:9, 318:14, 319:13, 319:20, 319:25, 320:14, 320:17, 323:18, 323:19, 323:24, 325:7, 325:10, 334:25, 336:19, 336:21, 336:23, 337:10, 348:18, 349:1, 349:17, 355:5, 356:25, 357:4, 357:5, 357:11, 358:24, 359:8, 359:22, 364:18, 366:17, 367:21, 371:9, 371:10, 371:12, 371:17, 372:16, 379:5, 380:13</p> <p>Costs [1] - 13:6</p> <p>coughing [1] - 280:23</p> <p>counsel [7] - 17:1, 17:13, 27:17, 28:17, 64:24, 65:17, 170:2</p> <p>Counsel [2] - 2:6, 142:24</p> <p>count [2] - 191:23, 282:9</p> <p>counterpart [1] - 152:10</p> <p>counterparts [1] - 124:19</p> <p>country [7] - 85:25, 99:15, 253:9, 255:21, 293:22, 318:21, 326:1</p> <p>County [1] - 60:23</p> <p>county [1] - 277:21</p> <p>couple [28] - 19:18, 46:14, 46:16, 67:9, 73:12, 76:2, 84:9, 85:10, 86:18, 108:22, 114:4, 119:4, 119:21, 124:22, 125:2, 145:4, 195:15, 197:15, 218:2, 250:8, 292:8, 315:9, 335:1, 337:15, 372:3, 373:7, 375:22, 377:15</p> <p>course [14] - 29:12, 55:17, 98:16, 110:23, 111:2, 126:22, 127:9, 309:12, 315:10, 315:16, 324:14, 354:21, 369:6, 370:4</p> <p>court [9] - 20:2, 27:1, 27:5, 28:6, 47:21, 140:1, 141:11, 200:1, 208:9</p> <p>Court [1] - 27:13</p> <p>Courts [2] - 199:17, 199:25</p> <p>cover [1] - 279:21</p> <p>Cover [1] - 9:4</p> <p>coverage [2] - 62:20, 246:2</p> <p>coverages [1] - 225:17</p> <p>covered [4] - 61:23, 206:21, 206:22, 280:15</p> <p>CP [165] - 13:4, 30:5, 30:17, 30:20, 31:1, 31:4, 31:6,</p>	<p>31:8, 31:10, 31:11, 31:12, 31:13, 31:14, 31:15, 31:20, 32:3, 42:10, 63:22, 63:24, 73:9, 73:17, 73:21, 86:23, 87:1, 87:11, 100:5, 308:3, 308:7, 308:25, 309:5, 309:8, 309:12, 309:15, 309:25, 310:3, 310:11, 310:16, 310:21, 310:25, 311:2, 311:5, 311:12, 311:15, 311:21, 312:5, 312:12, 312:14, 313:15, 313:20, 314:6, 314:7, 314:21, 318:6, 318:11, 318:18, 318:23, 318:25, 319:19, 319:22, 321:9, 321:19, 321:21, 321:24, 322:3, 322:13, 323:2, 323:4, 323:11, 323:13, 323:14, 323:22, 323:24, 324:7, 324:8, 324:25, 325:5, 325:9, 325:20, 325:25, 327:16, 330:21, 330:25, 331:10, 334:5, 334:9, 334:12, 334:17, 334:21, 345:25, 346:7, 346:13, 347:6, 347:11, 347:14, 351:15, 352:6, 352:14, 352:18, 353:24, 354:5, 354:7, 354:9, 356:14, 356:23, 357:7, 357:14, 357:16, 357:18, 359:8, 359:9, 359:12, 359:14, 359:25, 360:1, 360:6, 360:7, 360:25, 363:2, 363:6, 363:10, 363:15, 363:20, 364:11, 364:16, 365:21, 365:22, 366:9, 366:23, 366:24, 367:6, 368:3, 368:4, 368:7, 368:13, 368:15, 368:20, 372:2, 373:1, 373:15, 374:3, 374:5, 374:13, 374:15, 375:1, 375:20, 378:2, 378:4, 378:23, 378:24, 380:14, 382:9, 382:10, 382:13, 382:20</p> <p>cracking [1] - 62:11</p> <p>create [2] - 82:17, 186:6</p> <p>created [4] - 81:12, 207:5, 239:3, 279:4</p> <p>creating [3] - 27:9, 91:12, 352:19</p> <p>creation [1] - 270:5</p> <p>credit [2] - 116:22, 316:4</p> <p>credited [2] - 171:23, 171:25</p> <p>crew [1] - 19:24</p> <p>crews [2] - 161:21, 161:24</p> <p>crime [1] - 65:7</p> <p>criteria [26] - 66:21, 71:24,</p>	<p>82:2, 82:14, 159:25, 160:1, 160:7, 160:14, 161:2, 183:25, 202:19, 215:16, 308:22, 309:2, 309:5, 310:19, 311:16, 312:8, 316:24, 337:25, 338:3, 338:8, 338:13, 339:22, 340:23, 345:7</p> <p>criterion [6] - 311:1, 311:10, 317:10, 337:22, 337:25, 349:15</p> <p>critical [8] - 72:3, 96:16, 168:5, 212:22, 220:11, 254:12, 308:12, 355:18</p> <p>cross [8] - 24:21, 25:11, 45:8, 159:7, 177:2, 213:12, 271:14, 312:17</p> <p>CROSS [8] - 45:11, 88:1, 159:11, 177:5, 213:16, 271:18, 312:21, 337:17</p> <p>Cross [23] - 3:5, 3:6, 3:12, 3:17, 4:3, 4:10, 4:15, 4:15, 5:3, 5:4, 5:13, 5:19, 5:20, 6:3, 6:4, 6:7, 6:7, 6:8, 6:22, 7:9, 7:16, 8:3, 8:9</p> <p>cross-examination [7] - 24:21, 25:11, 45:8, 159:7, 177:2, 271:14, 312:17</p> <p>CROSS-EXAMINATION [8] - 45:11, 88:1, 159:11, 177:5, 213:16, 271:18, 312:21, 337:17</p> <p>Cross-examination [23] - 3:5, 3:6, 3:12, 3:17, 4:3, 4:10, 4:15, 4:15, 5:3, 5:4, 5:13, 5:19, 5:20, 6:3, 6:4, 6:7, 6:7, 6:18, 6:22, 7:9, 7:16, 8:3, 8:9</p> <p>crystal [1] - 190:14</p> <p>culminates [1] - 81:6</p> <p>culture [1] - 238:16</p> <p>curious [2] - 125:15, 263:15</p> <p>current [18] - 15:13, 15:23, 34:6, 36:12, 42:4, 44:17, 59:18, 143:16, 164:6, 175:6, 178:21, 178:23, 179:1, 198:4, 200:9, 270:24, 293:23, 298:9</p> <p>curtailed [1] - 205:6</p> <p>customer [28] - 13:15, 15:17, 50:6, 50:7, 53:22, 54:17, 55:19, 55:20, 56:2, 56:21, 60:10, 72:4, 72:5, 72:20, 77:13, 77:14, 96:10, 106:15, 107:16, 109:14, 115:25, 116:1, 117:19, 132:6, 313:4, 313:11, 353:12, 353:14</p> <p>customer's [1] - 51:2</p> <p>customers [146] - 22:5, 24:7,</p>
---	--	--	--

<p>29:1, 33:16, 33:18, 34:1, 34:6, 37:2, 40:19, 41:2, 41:11, 42:3, 42:18, 42:23, 44:8, 44:19, 44:24, 47:2, 47:7, 47:8, 47:15, 47:17, 48:8, 49:4, 49:9, 49:11, 49:14, 49:20, 49:23, 50:1, 50:3, 50:5, 51:1, 51:15, 52:11, 52:17, 53:11, 53:17, 53:20, 53:23, 55:5, 55:15, 56:6, 57:1, 57:12, 57:13, 57:15, 59:22, 60:8, 60:22, 64:1, 64:3, 64:5, 64:12, 64:15, 66:9, 66:13, 66:16, 66:19, 69:17, 72:23, 75:24, 76:3, 76:8, 76:10, 76:21, 76:24, 77:25, 82:7, 84:19, 84:23, 85:3, 95:16, 96:22, 97:24, 98:1, 98:15, 98:23, 102:10, 103:7, 104:13, 104:17, 104:18, 104:25, 106:19, 108:1, 108:7, 109:2, 110:24, 112:7, 113:13, 115:23, 117:14, 117:20, 118:10, 118:14, 118:15, 122:25, 130:14, 130:17, 133:11, 135:9, 135:14, 135:20, 138:25, 157:1, 157:24, 158:9, 158:12, 159:1, 159:24, 167:21, 167:24, 171:23, 172:1, 175:3, 175:9, 175:16, 176:19, 192:3, 192:6, 210:12, 211:10, 211:24, 212:11, 212:14, 241:17, 257:17, 257:25, 258:12, 268:2, 269:25, 310:24, 320:17, 333:9, 333:10, 333:14, 333:15, 336:25, 348:19, 350:25, 351:4, 351:6, 356:22, 356:24</p> <p>customers' [18] - 40:25, 55:23, 55:25, 58:7, 64:19, 83:4, 83:10, 95:7, 96:3, 97:1, 105:16, 105:21, 106:21, 107:19, 111:5, 112:2, 135:10, 135:17</p> <p>cut [3] - 50:8, 54:8, 114:22</p> <p>cutting [2] - 51:7, 113:12</p> <p>cyber [3] - 201:3, 201:6, 201:9</p> <p>cycle [22] - 45:21, 48:5, 48:17, 55:13, 68:24, 69:2, 106:12, 124:23, 134:19, 135:1, 135:11, 135:15, 136:25, 137:3, 175:1, 179:12, 216:2, 221:25, 249:7, 259:23, 260:11, 260:18</p>	<p>cynical [1] - 367:17</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">D</p> <hr/> <p>D.C [1] - 199:17</p> <p>DAKOTA [1] - 1:2</p> <p>Dakota [175] - 1:18, 2:17, 2:23, 12:9, 13:16, 15:8, 17:5, 23:18, 23:21, 23:25, 24:4, 24:18, 27:13, 29:22, 30:19, 30:23, 31:5, 32:11, 33:7, 34:7, 37:19, 42:1, 42:18, 44:7, 44:15, 44:24, 47:2, 47:8, 47:16, 52:8, 53:6, 58:13, 58:14, 73:14, 75:18, 78:11, 80:2, 85:11, 90:17, 117:11, 118:10, 118:14, 122:11, 124:12, 131:12, 132:3, 132:7, 144:4, 144:13, 145:2, 146:3, 146:20, 147:5, 147:13, 147:22, 148:1, 148:3, 148:15, 150:22, 150:23, 153:2, 153:8, 158:12, 158:14, 158:20, 159:1, 198:16, 210:12, 211:24, 212:17, 235:8, 235:16, 235:23, 266:6, 267:13, 270:17, 272:4, 272:8, 272:13, 273:1, 273:8, 273:11, 273:12, 273:13, 273:17, 273:20, 276:3, 282:1, 286:13, 287:6, 287:19, 287:20, 287:21, 287:25, 294:22, 296:7, 304:24, 304:25, 305:3, 308:4, 308:18, 308:19, 308:23, 309:6, 312:6, 315:1, 316:6, 318:12, 318:13, 318:19, 320:24, 321:6, 321:20, 322:4, 325:2, 326:6, 326:10, 326:11, 328:2, 346:11, 346:15, 346:16, 350:3, 350:12, 350:15, 350:24, 351:3, 351:5, 351:12, 352:3, 352:21, 353:14, 353:22, 353:23, 356:19, 358:5, 358:6, 358:8, 358:11, 358:13, 358:18, 358:19, 359:16, 359:19, 359:20, 360:7, 360:25, 361:3, 361:12, 362:5, 363:4, 363:25, 368:8, 368:14, 368:19, 369:4, 369:8, 369:9, 369:12, 373:25, 374:3, 374:4, 374:13, 376:4, 376:6, 379:14, 382:12, 382:16, 383:1</p>	<p>Dakota's [7] - 124:9, 296:6, 349:20, 349:22, 350:9, 369:11, 369:14</p> <p>Dakota-focused [1] - 158:20</p> <p>damage [2] - 61:12, 157:18</p> <p>dampening [1] - 291:11</p> <p>danger [1] - 381:23</p> <p>dangerous [1] - 335:13</p> <p>Dante [2] - 11:23, 12:23</p> <p>DANTE [1] - 8:2</p> <p>data [29] - 21:23, 67:15, 71:9, 78:20, 80:7, 81:23, 83:6, 91:12, 118:14, 118:15, 165:22, 223:11, 227:18, 242:3, 246:18, 247:11, 247:12, 256:2, 282:2, 317:13, 317:17, 326:8, 348:4, 350:12, 352:24, 353:4, 353:6, 354:1, 373:20</p> <p>Data [4] - 11:15, 12:8, 12:14, 12:15</p> <p>Date [1] - 13:4</p> <p>date [11] - 18:3, 66:15, 86:25, 87:10, 87:11, 122:23, 175:7, 283:4, 317:16, 344:5, 376:21</p> <p>dated [3] - 13:12, 342:13, 342:25</p> <p>dates [1] - 343:15</p> <p>dating [1] - 164:20</p> <p>Dave [1] - 245:25</p> <p>day-to-day [2] - 98:25, 175:22</p> <p>days [9] - 23:8, 26:22, 106:15, 107:16, 169:12, 179:15, 180:3, 180:13, 362:23</p> <p>dead [1] - 269:22</p> <p>deadline [1] - 18:3</p> <p>deal [15] - 19:8, 92:22, 93:14, 103:9, 104:1, 105:7, 115:18, 182:9, 191:13, 196:17, 198:9, 277:15, 288:23, 289:1, 351:13</p> <p>dealing [5] - 102:5, 250:18, 254:15, 275:23, 278:6</p> <p>deals [2] - 103:10, 110:15</p> <p>dealt [7] - 277:1, 287:10, 287:11, 287:14, 289:5, 290:22, 338:12</p> <p>Deb [1] - 16:22</p> <p>debate [1] - 203:24</p> <p>debt [1] - 284:20</p> <p>decades [1] - 73:12</p> <p>December [7] - 283:4, 296:23, 297:5, 299:3, 342:25, 343:16, 344:5</p> <p>decide [7] - 95:10, 96:21, 97:1, 132:15, 153:23,</p>	<p>183:20, 329:25</p> <p>decided [4] - 74:12, 135:7, 199:22, 279:5</p> <p>decides [1] - 238:24</p> <p>deciding [2] - 94:22, 239:7</p> <p>decile [1] - 68:14</p> <p>decision [35] - 20:11, 21:15, 23:4, 23:11, 27:11, 27:12, 27:16, 35:21, 53:15, 74:23, 75:2, 75:3, 93:20, 96:13, 96:16, 97:9, 97:12, 97:13, 97:17, 101:22, 111:21, 118:6, 142:25, 154:4, 197:22, 199:7, 199:24, 206:1, 219:9, 231:5, 232:3, 233:11, 233:12, 322:7, 362:25</p> <p>decisionmaking [6] - 132:11, 143:6, 182:11, 205:24, 206:2, 232:5</p> <p>decisions [21] - 22:22, 42:22, 51:9, 72:17, 77:3, 77:11, 78:2, 85:12, 85:14, 85:20, 93:25, 100:23, 102:8, 122:2, 122:3, 122:17, 148:6, 151:3, 153:21, 205:3, 219:11</p> <p>decline [1] - 176:12</p> <p>decommission [1] - 292:23</p> <p>decommissioning [1] - 292:12</p> <p>decrease [5] - 272:14, 272:24, 276:14, 302:16, 302:17</p> <p>decreases [2] - 271:25, 272:14</p> <p>decreasing [2] - 275:8, 275:9</p> <p>dedicated [3] - 167:3, 251:25, 278:18</p> <p>deems [1] - 126:20</p> <p>defendable [1] - 198:7</p> <p>defer [1] - 167:5</p> <p>Deficiency [1] - 9:4</p> <p>deficit [1] - 197:1</p> <p>defined [6] - 103:20, 104:9, 129:21, 229:25, 280:2, 333:7</p> <p>defines [2] - 343:5, 343:6</p> <p>definitely [4] - 64:19, 64:24, 73:6, 134:9</p> <p>definition [7] - 43:10, 126:17, 279:1, 324:2, 336:20, 337:2, 337:4</p> <p>definitions [1] - 336:21</p> <p>deflect [1] - 129:16</p> <p>degrade [1] - 127:20</p> <p>degree [2] - 86:12, 195:4</p> <p>degrees [1] - 370:6</p> <p>delay [2] - 175:13, 205:4</p> <p>delays [1] - 206:5</p>
--	--	--	---

<p>delicately [1] - 196:11 deliver [4] - 236:20, 240:22, 242:15, 307:23 delivered [3] - 223:15, 223:23, 249:2 delivering [3] - 210:11, 241:1, 242:14 demand [25] - 31:22, 42:8, 73:4, 96:10, 99:16, 105:8, 106:21, 138:8, 309:17, 312:2, 312:4, 313:1, 313:7, 313:9, 315:2, 315:3, 322:17, 322:23, 324:8, 329:18, 329:21, 336:18, 336:21, 336:22, 381:5 demand-related [4] - 309:17, 336:18, 336:21, 336:22 demands [4] - 310:2, 310:6, 310:8, 333:17 demonstrate [5] - 29:13, 34:17, 116:3, 210:4, 323:12 demonstrated [1] - 176:3 demonstrates [1] - 32:3 demonstration [1] - 185:12 denial [1] - 148:23 denied [1] - 74:6 Denise [1] - 141:12 denominator [1] - 346:21 deny [1] - 74:4 denying [1] - 365:4 depart [1] - 31:19 department [3] - 216:4, 216:19, 289:10 departments [1] - 115:3 departure [1] - 29:21 dependent [1] - 210:12 depot [1] - 276:22 deprecation [1] - 299:17 depreciate [4] - 280:10, 284:21, 284:22, 285:7 depreciated [2] - 296:7, 302:22 depreciates [2] - 299:16, 299:18 depreciation [55] - 32:5, 33:7, 33:20, 267:14, 267:16, 267:17, 267:25, 268:7, 268:11, 268:12, 268:19, 268:22, 268:24, 271:10, 271:25, 272:25, 273:7, 273:18, 274:7, 276:4, 276:11, 280:15, 280:20, 281:7, 281:18, 281:20, 283:13, 285:1, 285:9, 285:10, 285:14, 286:1, 286:2, 286:4, 286:13, 287:10, 287:12, 287:13, 287:18, 287:22, 290:12, 290:13, 291:7,</p>	<p>292:15, 293:6, 295:8, 295:15, 295:20, 296:4, 299:21, 299:24, 302:21, 303:22, 304:13 Dept [1] - 2:22 depth [2] - 345:7, 345:9 describe [9] - 60:17, 84:12, 84:13, 149:7, 180:23, 180:25, 282:24, 319:2, 336:18 described [7] - 89:11, 105:1, 157:11, 251:4, 259:23, 335:21, 336:1 describes [1] - 212:23 describing [1] - 243:17 Description [7] - 9:3, 10:2, 11:2, 12:2, 12:10, 13:2, 14:2 description [3] - 230:25, 233:19, 297:22 deserves [1] - 48:4 design [11] - 149:10, 149:21, 167:19, 167:25, 180:8, 207:2, 236:17, 237:1, 240:22, 242:23, 309:20 designate [1] - 66:6 designated [1] - 16:7 designation [1] - 90:20 designed [8] - 24:6, 136:10, 161:24, 183:1, 207:3, 211:19, 212:19, 267:25 designers [1] - 239:11 designs [1] - 310:5 desired [1] - 85:8 desires [2] - 77:10, 77:13 desk [2] - 95:2, 101:21 despite [1] - 34:2 detail [4] - 42:9, 119:12, 183:16, 287:1 detailed [1] - 244:15 details [5] - 160:9, 181:22, 219:8, 231:8, 261:17 detect [1] - 326:23 determination [6] - 43:24, 91:5, 125:6, 161:3, 227:22, 314:24 determine [15] - 35:3, 35:5, 78:10, 80:6, 162:12, 191:5, 218:18, 225:15, 270:24, 271:2, 286:12, 308:4, 308:17, 310:22, 317:14 determined [2] - 62:7, 191:3 determining [6] - 225:20, 270:23, 318:13, 319:25, 331:16, 342:15 develop [10] - 20:12, 40:11, 81:20, 81:23, 217:20, 218:9, 218:15, 346:13, 372:15, 379:22 developed [5] - 43:17, 82:3,</p>	<p>86:7, 134:24, 135:4 developing [2] - 21:10, 329:16 development [17] - 58:7, 76:25, 77:20, 130:19, 130:23, 131:12, 132:22, 132:24, 133:3, 133:22, 146:1, 146:7, 146:13, 218:5, 218:12, 221:12, 320:2 developments [1] - 363:14 deviates [2] - 313:19, 313:20 dialogue [1] - 169:1 difference [22] - 166:8, 168:13, 188:15, 193:12, 222:17, 222:21, 263:8, 268:10, 327:7, 327:12, 327:18, 327:20, 333:25, 334:3, 361:16, 362:1, 369:1, 371:8, 371:20, 372:3, 380:18 differences [5] - 42:17, 42:18, 86:10, 207:13, 346:4 different [81] - 20:12, 20:13, 20:24, 31:24, 32:2, 69:2, 70:12, 76:16, 79:11, 85:17, 85:18, 85:19, 85:21, 120:19, 123:17, 123:18, 123:19, 124:4, 124:7, 124:8, 124:14, 130:22, 145:8, 149:22, 157:3, 162:6, 167:19, 170:16, 185:17, 187:15, 201:3, 201:6, 206:1, 206:9, 206:19, 206:23, 215:13, 221:14, 229:18, 244:16, 259:16, 280:7, 287:22, 287:23, 292:18, 292:19, 295:4, 295:8, 295:9, 309:22, 315:16, 320:10, 320:12, 325:16, 328:6, 350:10, 351:11, 352:5, 353:19, 355:23, 355:24, 356:18, 357:6, 357:23, 358:1, 361:1, 361:12, 361:15, 361:24, 364:25, 365:8, 365:16, 369:25, 370:3, 372:15, 373:25, 377:2, 377:20, 377:21, 378:20, 382:21 differential [1] - 328:2 differently [1] - 53:20 differing [1] - 365:19 difficult [6] - 109:2, 237:3, 290:4, 345:10, 359:5, 370:1 difficulty [1] - 322:5 dig [2] - 22:17, 100:20 digging [1] - 362:21</p>	<p>dilemma [1] - 345:3 Diller [1] - 17:8 dinner [4] - 26:24, 141:13, 305:19, 305:20 direct [25] - 48:19, 58:2, 73:1, 73:23, 112:21, 115:13, 115:20, 141:24, 149:22, 156:12, 173:22, 180:17, 180:18, 181:4, 266:25, 267:12, 268:15, 269:1, 270:25, 271:21, 272:17, 304:15, 304:17, 307:15, 351:8 Direct [32] - 3:5, 3:11, 3:16, 4:3, 4:10, 4:14, 5:3, 5:12, 5:19, 6:3, 6:6, 6:16, 6:21, 7:9, 7:16, 8:3, 8:8, 9:11, 9:14, 9:15, 9:23, 10:4, 10:7, 10:9, 10:12, 10:15, 10:16, 11:18, 11:21, 11:23, 11:24, 12:4 DIRECT [6] - 39:1, 156:8, 173:16, 209:17, 266:23, 307:13 directed [6] - 71:23, 167:13, 201:10, 270:8, 280:9, 379:21 direction [4] - 98:14, 98:20, 135:7, 186:8 directions [2] - 75:14, 201:9 directive [1] - 260:13 directly [13] - 28:19, 28:20, 49:10, 57:23, 72:7, 148:2, 153:14, 163:3, 182:6, 220:16, 257:23, 257:25, 372:13 Director [1] - 210:2 director [2] - 267:9, 307:25 disagree [1] - 78:1 disagreements [1] - 44:12 disagrees [1] - 77:15 disallow [3] - 35:20, 43:23, 371:14 disallowance [1] - 43:6 disallowed [4] - 74:15, 74:20, 219:5, 247:18 disallowing [1] - 219:2 disaster [1] - 205:5 disclose [1] - 86:24 disconnect [1] - 278:21 discouraged [1] - 132:12 discourse [1] - 171:18 discoveries [1] - 294:4 discovery [4] - 286:11, 294:11, 294:14, 294:18 discretion [1] - 249:9 discrimination [1] - 24:8 discuss [5] - 92:21, 113:3, 165:25, 267:12, 280:25 discussed [11] - 53:3, 63:7,</p>
---	--	--	---

<p>74:3, 130:19, 157:16, 165:3, 165:8, 216:11, 256:15, 277:10, 279:23</p> <p>discusses [1] - 156:19</p> <p>discussing [3] - 94:18, 214:8, 292:10</p> <p>discussion [22] - 41:22, 73:24, 113:11, 123:3, 123:13, 124:2, 124:7, 125:4, 125:19, 141:20, 148:22, 198:25, 204:4, 286:23, 292:7, 304:6, 304:11, 334:17, 360:20, 368:5, 371:6, 383:2</p> <p>discussions [2] - 125:1, 162:13</p> <p>disinterest [1] - 182:14</p> <p>dismantle [1] - 298:4</p> <p>dismissed [1] - 305:15</p> <p>dispatch [3] - 112:5, 319:9, 364:23</p> <p>dispatching [2] - 111:21, 350:1</p> <p>dispersion [1] - 335:10</p> <p>displace [3] - 56:21, 56:24, 111:25</p> <p>displacing [2] - 110:13, 110:16</p> <p>dispose [1] - 276:17</p> <p>disposing [2] - 275:12, 278:13</p> <p>disproportionately [1] - 261:11</p> <p>dispute [1] - 41:9</p> <p>disputed [1] - 30:2</p> <p>disregarded [1] - 368:6</p> <p>distinction [2] - 269:5, 371:8</p> <p>distinguish [2] - 239:24, 240:3</p> <p>distribution [36] - 29:6, 29:17, 32:20, 40:24, 81:11, 81:15, 82:13, 116:18, 156:22, 161:18, 162:6, 162:23, 165:6, 167:18, 268:13, 269:15, 269:20, 272:7, 272:16, 273:3, 273:10, 273:12, 273:13, 273:20, 273:21, 273:24, 273:25, 274:4, 276:3, 276:6, 293:4, 304:13, 304:21, 305:2, 319:18, 349:8</p> <p>District [1] - 27:13</p> <p>diverse [2] - 121:12, 147:23</p> <p>diversity [8] - 147:25, 315:21, 317:25, 336:13, 350:7, 355:13, 381:8, 381:14</p> <p>divide [1] - 132:3</p> <p>divided [1] - 346:16</p>	<p>Dobesh [1] - 343:4</p> <p>docket [5] - 68:3, 287:9, 321:15, 321:16</p> <p>dockets [1] - 43:25</p> <p>Document [1] - 13:20</p> <p>document [16] - 67:25, 69:21, 69:22, 92:20, 92:23, 145:1, 166:4, 226:1, 226:6, 226:9, 254:7, 265:15, 265:21, 269:11, 282:22, 373:13</p> <p>documentation [1] - 242:2</p> <p>documents [4] - 69:8, 145:4, 335:22, 336:2</p> <p>Dog [13] - 54:2, 54:6, 55:8, 55:10, 63:6, 63:14, 63:18, 134:21, 134:22, 297:23, 298:9, 300:20, 302:7</p> <p>dollar [3] - 131:10, 133:21, 222:8</p> <p>dollars [12] - 153:20, 239:8, 251:18, 252:11, 261:18, 284:10, 356:24, 356:25, 357:4, 357:8, 357:11, 362:14</p> <p>donates [1] - 77:2</p> <p>donations [1] - 153:16</p> <p>done [36] - 18:17, 19:22, 23:1, 23:2, 71:4, 80:17, 81:6, 92:12, 115:2, 117:13, 117:19, 120:16, 150:23, 179:15, 180:9, 190:3, 197:12, 197:13, 201:13, 201:14, 216:12, 218:5, 219:10, 250:16, 252:14, 273:23, 281:5, 293:10, 295:2, 296:10, 344:17, 344:19, 344:20, 346:6, 374:14, 384:12</p> <p>door [2] - 72:7, 254:11</p> <p>doors [1] - 305:23</p> <p>DOT [1] - 277:25</p> <p>dots [1] - 253:23</p> <p>double [5] - 69:11, 106:25, 170:24, 245:12, 348:7</p> <p>double-check [4] - 106:25, 170:24, 245:12, 348:7</p> <p>double-sided [1] - 69:11</p> <p>dow [1] - 193:24</p> <p>down [70] - 19:9, 20:2, 45:16, 47:19, 53:19, 54:23, 79:13, 96:12, 105:14, 106:22, 109:10, 109:14, 112:12, 112:24, 112:25, 116:24, 117:4, 118:22, 119:20, 129:1, 134:20, 135:22, 136:6, 136:8, 136:10, 136:11, 137:7, 137:9, 146:17, 146:23, 147:2, 147:12, 148:8, 152:5,</p>	<p>165:17, 166:3, 167:10, 168:24, 192:12, 192:13, 194:13, 197:12, 197:14, 274:8, 276:22, 277:2, 277:8, 279:24, 289:16, 292:13, 293:10, 293:12, 295:11, 299:16, 299:25, 301:13, 301:16, 301:17, 301:18, 301:24, 302:3, 302:4, 303:5, 303:7, 314:5, 324:7, 345:7, 348:16, 353:12, 353:15</p> <p>downs [1] - 121:18</p> <p>downstairs [1] - 265:25</p> <p>downstream [2] - 351:21, 365:7</p> <p>downtown [4] - 114:20, 116:12, 136:20</p> <p>downturn [6] - 56:6, 76:14, 88:14, 99:14, 129:3, 129:4</p> <p>downward [1] - 125:21</p> <p>Dr [10] - 30:18, 31:25, 39:14, 39:17, 43:5, 308:9, 311:17, 343:3, 368:17, 372:9</p> <p>drain [1] - 276:23</p> <p>drained [1] - 276:25</p> <p>draw [4] - 146:16, 146:22, 330:17, 371:20</p> <p>drawing [1] - 361:20</p> <p>drawn [2] - 371:8, 371:9</p> <p>drink [1] - 62:25</p> <p>drive [6] - 161:12, 163:1, 202:7, 277:17, 324:17, 352:9</p> <p>driven [11] - 51:22, 80:24, 104:16, 175:19, 260:9, 260:10, 260:13, 275:19, 276:4, 355:5, 363:20</p> <p>driver [5] - 81:24, 109:6, 163:19, 193:23, 363:17</p> <p>drivers [22] - 44:11, 48:9, 103:2, 112:23, 128:23, 141:22, 142:1, 192:9, 192:18, 193:14, 239:14, 309:7, 310:4, 310:22, 323:24, 324:2, 324:5, 350:23, 354:10, 354:11, 364:17, 364:22</p> <p>drives [3] - 183:5, 239:22, 334:24</p> <p>driving [10] - 29:3, 102:17, 112:15, 204:3, 248:4, 252:24, 305:2, 352:2, 365:16, 365:18</p> <p>drop [3] - 96:10, 99:16, 277:12</p> <p>dropped [2] - 76:15, 99:18</p> <p>dry [3] - 199:16, 200:15, 203:20</p> <p>dual [1] - 211:8</p>	<p>due [9] - 35:21, 62:11, 94:2, 99:2, 121:4, 157:4, 175:13, 371:17</p> <p>duly [7] - 16:7, 38:22, 156:6, 173:14, 209:15, 266:21, 307:11</p> <p>dumb [2] - 314:5, 348:16</p> <p>duration [3] - 66:11, 66:15, 66:17</p> <p>during [16] - 31:17, 32:24, 33:2, 61:10, 106:20, 165:18, 311:24, 315:16, 315:23, 322:15, 324:14, 335:7, 335:8, 341:8, 377:2, 378:21</p> <p>dynamic [1] - 137:22</p> <p>dynamics [1] - 138:3</p>
E			
<p>eager [1] - 41:11</p> <p>early [4] - 99:5, 102:23, 206:16, 338:3</p> <p>earn [12] - 33:20, 43:1, 84:20, 144:14, 219:23, 220:2, 222:14, 238:7, 239:19, 239:22, 247:13, 248:19</p> <p>earned [7] - 127:16, 127:21, 144:6, 211:12, 220:21, 220:24, 246:1</p> <p>earning [1] - 247:8</p> <p>earnings [9] - 130:12, 149:4, 149:8, 149:13, 234:19, 257:9, 258:6, 258:23, 270:17</p> <p>ease [6] - 342:18, 342:22, 343:5, 343:7, 343:12, 343:13</p> <p>easier [3] - 238:15, 265:17, 284:11</p> <p>easiest [1] - 197:22</p> <p>easily [1] - 367:15</p> <p>East [2] - 2:17, 2:22</p> <p>eastern [1] - 21:8</p> <p>easy [7] - 51:3, 116:24, 183:7, 284:24, 294:2, 294:5, 295:21</p> <p>eat [1] - 140:7</p> <p>economic [25] - 41:3, 76:1, 76:6, 76:7, 76:10, 76:14, 76:21, 76:25, 77:5, 77:11, 77:20, 88:14, 99:14, 112:5, 130:18, 130:23, 131:11, 132:21, 132:24, 133:3, 133:22, 135:1, 146:1, 146:6, 146:12</p> <p>economics [4] - 181:19, 192:5, 199:5, 345:18</p> <p>edge [1] - 364:1</p>			

<p>educate ^[1] - 288:16 education ^[1] - 185:12 educational ^[1] - 184:22 effect ^[9] - 132:21, 199:20, 226:9, 272:13, 304:8, 304:12, 322:15, 375:5, 376:22 effective ^[11] - 15:13, 15:23, 28:25, 55:24, 64:12, 116:14, 121:20, 135:15, 137:13, 211:15, 303:8 effectively ^[3] - 176:22, 186:22, 199:14 effects ^[1] - 311:25 efficiency ^[3] - 60:4, 115:1, 156:24 efficient ^[4] - 115:12, 138:14, 138:17, 138:19 efficiently ^[3] - 49:13, 174:22, 176:22 effluent ^[1] - 202:18 effluents ^[1] - 189:19 effort ^[6] - 22:24, 44:6, 44:22, 157:20, 271:6, 278:12 efforts ^[7] - 115:2, 153:6, 162:16, 199:23, 200:5, 221:7, 228:20 eight ^[4] - 25:4, 140:21, 196:8, 196:20 either ^[23] - 25:17, 33:24, 49:15, 63:19, 93:8, 127:18, 136:3, 142:19, 154:1, 178:11, 179:17, 196:12, 245:15, 275:20, 287:11, 314:19, 315:25, 339:20, 368:18, 370:5, 371:3, 378:20, 380:19 elaborate ^[1] - 360:23 Electric ^[3] - 1:6, 12:6, 12:13 electric ^[15] - 15:11, 15:14, 15:24, 41:1, 64:8, 210:9, 210:11, 270:1, 272:10, 272:15, 272:25, 273:4, 304:20, 311:9 electrical ^[1] - 64:6 electricity ^[2] - 69:17, 175:15 element ^[7] - 71:25, 97:4, 97:5, 97:7, 97:8, 127:6, 218:7 elementary ^[1] - 274:21 elements ^[2] - 96:25, 215:15 elevated ^[1] - 206:4 eleven ^[1] - 282:9 eligibility ^[1] - 246:18 eligible ^[4] - 214:14, 221:6, 235:20, 246:4 elsewhere ^[4] - 210:21, 211:4, 223:4, 312:7 emerged ^[1] - 363:10</p>	<p>Emineth ^[1] - 141:12 emissions ^[1] - 157:14 emphasize ^[1] - 329:15 Empire ^[1] - 12:12 empirical ^[2] - 323:10, 368:21 employed ^[4] - 152:16, 152:17, 213:19, 297:16 employee ^[48] - 51:9, 77:14, 116:22, 152:19, 156:23, 161:13, 176:10, 183:13, 185:5, 188:3, 211:11, 211:13, 211:22, 213:6, 213:8, 215:11, 216:20, 217:16, 218:11, 218:19, 222:22, 229:20, 229:21, 235:7, 239:18, 245:5, 245:25, 246:12, 247:8, 248:17, 248:23, 251:2, 252:13, 258:21, 258:24, 259:3, 259:9, 259:11, 259:12, 259:15, 259:17, 259:21, 260:6, 260:9, 260:13, 261:1, 356:8 employee's ^[5] - 215:20, 218:18, 225:14, 225:19, 249:12 employees ^[98] - 19:5, 35:25, 36:3, 51:14, 51:19, 59:15, 74:5, 77:7, 127:24, 128:4, 143:16, 162:13, 176:20, 180:22, 181:1, 184:16, 185:5, 188:5, 188:9, 193:23, 193:25, 194:3, 194:4, 210:9, 210:13, 210:17, 211:4, 211:9, 211:20, 212:5, 212:7, 212:19, 212:22, 212:24, 213:3, 214:14, 215:24, 216:13, 216:15, 217:4, 217:14, 217:19, 218:1, 218:8, 218:10, 218:14, 219:22, 220:16, 220:23, 221:6, 224:7, 224:9, 224:18, 224:22, 224:24, 227:6, 229:17, 229:18, 229:19, 229:23, 230:6, 230:11, 234:10, 235:14, 235:15, 235:20, 236:14, 236:19, 238:6, 239:24, 240:1, 244:10, 244:17, 245:8, 246:4, 248:20, 248:22, 249:8, 249:9, 249:16, 250:10, 250:12, 250:13, 250:23, 251:6, 252:5, 253:8, 253:10, 253:13, 254:15, 259:4, 260:16, 261:10, 262:11, 262:13, 263:1 employees' ^[2] - 211:1,</p>	<p>237:22 employer ^[2] - 217:11, 239:4 employment ^[1] - 183:6 encompass ^[2] - 90:5, 343:13 encourage ^[3] - 69:16, 76:6, 110:19 encouraged ^[3] - 29:1, 41:8, 132:12 encouragement ^[1] - 50:2 encouragements ^[1] - 371:5 encouraging ^[1] - 76:20 end ^[31] - 21:1, 41:13, 45:25, 50:24, 59:22, 61:19, 65:25, 78:19, 89:16, 129:25, 158:9, 161:11, 216:12, 275:16, 285:12, 290:13, 290:22, 295:10, 298:16, 299:19, 302:23, 303:14, 320:7, 333:10, 333:16, 337:22, 343:18, 358:15, 361:14, 367:15 End ^[1] - 13:14 ended ^[2] - 21:7, 168:23 endorses ^[1] - 314:19 ends ^[1] - 48:17 energy ^[72] - 42:16, 44:23, 47:6, 49:21, 50:3, 54:22, 56:6, 56:12, 56:22, 56:23, 58:19, 64:17, 76:9, 76:14, 76:19, 76:23, 82:15, 83:4, 83:10, 105:16, 106:16, 106:18, 107:21, 109:15, 109:24, 109:25, 110:1, 110:5, 110:23, 111:2, 111:3, 111:5, 111:24, 112:2, 113:15, 117:8, 117:12, 117:16, 117:17, 117:21, 117:22, 117:23, 118:2, 118:4, 118:7, 118:12, 121:12, 121:14, 121:15, 138:19, 156:21, 164:22, 174:17, 175:2, 191:19, 192:2, 198:9, 198:21, 254:16, 309:11, 311:25, 315:11, 316:1, 319:20, 319:21, 319:24, 337:1, 337:10, 347:20, 348:1, 354:20, 369:23 Energy ^[30] - 2:7, 12:6, 16:14, 16:19, 52:2, 52:4, 52:18, 52:24, 67:4, 71:11, 71:13, 77:7, 122:13, 124:9, 146:2, 146:19, 147:24, 151:2, 152:15, 166:2, 174:13, 210:3, 250:11, 250:14, 251:1, 251:16, 267:10, 308:1, 319:11, 319:14 energy-related ^[2] - 337:1,</p>	<p>337:10 energy-weighting ^[1] - 347:20 engage ^[2] - 77:5, 210:8 engaged ^[2] - 217:13, 217:19 engagement ^[8] - 161:13, 216:21, 216:23, 216:25, 217:5, 217:16, 218:22, 218:23 engaging ^[1] - 217:6 engineer ^[2] - 120:12, 195:3 engineered ^[1] - 178:14 engineering ^[4] - 168:4, 293:13, 293:16, 293:25 engineers ^[9] - 81:14, 160:5, 160:8, 160:10, 161:1, 183:8, 185:16, 194:24, 207:7 enhance ^[1] - 75:22 ensure ^[12] - 40:18, 42:24, 43:18, 47:10, 49:16, 176:7, 213:8, 309:10, 309:16, 309:20, 311:23, 336:24 ensuring ^[1] - 174:21 entail ^[3] - 48:24, 108:20, 157:6 enter ^[4] - 26:10, 145:13, 177:18, 336:12 entered ^[2] - 39:4, 45:3 entire ^[4] - 224:3, 265:12, 273:15, 311:24 entirely ^[2] - 33:5, 152:18 entirety ^[3] - 272:9, 280:10, 289:15 entity ^[4] - 132:13, 280:7, 286:17, 319:12 entry ^[4] - 183:25, 184:5, 185:2, 304:20 entry-level ^[1] - 185:2 environment ^[2] - 75:12, 85:1 environmental ^[7] - 82:8, 110:3, 121:13, 121:21, 187:4, 275:11, 276:1 environmentally ^[2] - 276:16, 277:6 environments ^[1] - 199:6 EPA ^[1] - 277:24 EPRI ^[1] - 198:11 EPS ^[6] - 222:1, 234:15, 234:21, 235:5, 257:13, 258:2 equal ^[3] - 302:24, 331:2, 334:13 equalize ^[1] - 336:10 equation ^[2] - 274:25, 381:6 equipment ^[12] - 101:13, 114:3, 158:6, 178:11, 178:15, 178:18, 178:21, 179:3, 179:7, 206:12,</p>
---	--	--	--

<p>206:17, 301:11 equitable [1] - 29:17 equity [11] - 40:16, 125:3, 125:5, 125:13, 125:15, 125:18, 125:20, 127:15, 144:3, 144:7, 144:12 equivalent [3] - 152:11, 152:15, 337:9 era [1] - 322:17 especially [4] - 97:18, 117:11, 160:2, 303:4 essential [1] - 195:23 essentially [10] - 31:25, 103:21, 135:3, 136:13, 168:2, 185:22, 212:2, 219:23, 262:9, 268:16 establish [1] - 51:12 established [3] - 36:21, 185:15, 338:8 establishes [1] - 149:3 establishment [1] - 158:19 esteemed [1] - 362:22 estimate [11] - 111:11, 140:6, 161:22, 283:21, 283:23, 293:14, 293:25, 300:18, 300:25, 325:3, 325:4 estimated [1] - 161:24 estimates [4] - 276:5, 301:3, 305:3, 306:1 estimating [1] - 54:20 et [1] - 18:25 evaluate [1] - 205:25 evaluation [5] - 82:5, 108:17, 135:17, 139:3, 180:11 evaporation [1] - 298:8 evening [2] - 306:21, 312:23 event [12] - 66:10, 158:1, 175:24, 175:25, 186:25, 187:7, 187:8, 187:12, 190:12, 206:13, 259:18, 260:25 eventually [3] - 161:4, 163:2, 163:22 every-three-year [2] - 99:10, 99:11 everywhere [1] - 32:12 evidence [10] - 23:3, 33:9, 35:12, 38:11, 52:9, 286:11, 307:17, 318:8, 325:24, 325:25 ex [3] - 165:14, 165:16, 165:17 exact [6] - 112:17, 135:4, 248:10, 248:13, 263:9, 376:21 exactly [14] - 79:14, 86:21, 99:7, 104:11, 114:24, 138:23, 139:11, 183:1, 223:8, 231:9, 237:7, 277:19, 339:13, 364:15</p>	<p>EXAMINATION [49] - 39:1, 45:11, 88:1, 100:16, 119:1, 129:13, 141:17, 145:22, 150:17, 156:8, 159:11, 161:9, 163:9, 166:20, 171:13, 173:16, 177:5, 188:1, 189:3, 197:7, 202:2, 203:9, 204:9, 209:17, 213:16, 231:16, 243:6, 249:23, 256:12, 257:4, 261:6, 262:1, 266:23, 271:18, 288:14, 292:1, 296:19, 304:4, 307:13, 312:21, 337:17, 348:14, 360:16, 366:6, 373:10, 377:16, 378:10, 380:10, 382:6 examination [66] - 3:5, 3:5, 3:6, 3:9, 3:11, 3:12, 3:16, 3:17, 4:3, 4:3, 4:6, 4:10, 4:10, 4:14, 4:15, 4:15, 4:18, 4:18, 4:19, 5:3, 5:3, 5:4, 5:6, 5:7, 5:7, 5:12, 5:13, 5:15, 5:15, 5:19, 5:19, 5:20, 5:22, 5:23, 5:23, 6:3, 6:3, 6:4, 6:6, 6:7, 6:7, 6:14, 6:16, 6:18, 6:21, 6:22, 7:5, 7:9, 7:9, 7:12, 7:12, 7:16, 7:16, 7:19, 8:3, 8:3, 8:6, 8:8, 8:9, 24:21, 25:11, 45:8, 159:7, 177:2, 271:14, 312:17 Examination [82] - 3:7, 3:7, 3:8, 3:8, 3:9, 3:12, 3:13, 3:13, 3:14, 3:17, 3:18, 3:18, 3:19, 3:19, 3:20, 4:4, 4:4, 4:5, 4:5, 4:6, 4:7, 4:11, 4:11, 4:12, 4:12, 4:16, 4:17, 4:17, 4:20, 4:21, 5:5, 5:5, 5:6, 5:8, 5:9, 5:10, 5:13, 5:14, 5:14, 5:16, 5:21, 5:21, 5:22, 6:8, 6:9, 6:11, 6:12, 6:13, 6:17, 6:17, 6:18, 6:22, 6:23, 6:23, 6:24, 6:24, 7:3, 7:3, 7:4, 7:5, 7:6, 7:10, 7:10, 7:11, 7:11, 7:13, 7:13, 7:17, 7:17, 7:18, 7:18, 7:19, 7:20, 7:21, 8:4, 8:4, 8:5, 8:5, 8:6, 8:9, 8:10, 8:10 examined [6] - 38:22, 156:6, 173:14, 209:15, 266:21, 307:11 example [57] - 43:5, 46:12, 47:3, 57:24, 60:9, 80:10, 95:13, 95:25, 102:13, 104:22, 109:8, 113:18, 117:1, 121:6, 131:22, 132:14, 139:1, 162:23,</p>	<p>165:12, 175:24, 187:16, 191:23, 194:12, 222:11, 222:22, 225:10, 230:6, 247:6, 247:7, 258:13, 258:15, 262:17, 263:7, 269:19, 275:19, 277:16, 279:1, 294:21, 296:12, 298:13, 299:12, 301:22, 301:25, 337:5, 345:13, 351:17, 352:4, 354:12, 357:9, 358:5, 368:16, 371:25, 374:1, 374:11, 381:11, 381:13 examples [8] - 54:5, 113:18, 161:17, 162:1, 269:16, 351:1, 354:6, 372:21 exceed [1] - 202:12 exceeded [1] - 259:10 exceeding [1] - 202:14 excellence [2] - 156:23, 161:13 excellent [1] - 207:17 except [3] - 22:12, 273:24, 273:25 excess [3] - 16:1, 130:6, 367:15 excessive [1] - 49:6 exchange [2] - 117:16, 381:15 Exchange [1] - 283:21 exchanges [5] - 315:21, 317:25, 336:13, 355:13, 381:9 exciting [1] - 196:23 exclude [1] - 35:15 exclusively [1] - 250:12 excuse [8] - 47:18, 55:7, 148:14, 188:3, 234:1, 270:2, 294:10, 307:15 excused [3] - 154:24, 264:9, 383:19 executing [2] - 80:21, 97:20 executive [8] - 51:5, 212:4, 245:17, 262:10, 262:12, 262:15, 262:25, 263:1 executive-level [4] - 212:4, 262:10, 262:12, 262:25 executives [3] - 51:4, 51:10, 241:3 executives' [1] - 51:20 exempt [2] - 236:13, 245:7 exercise [1] - 98:8 exhibit [39] - 26:10, 64:23, 65:8, 71:5, 87:5, 87:16, 89:17, 90:2, 90:20, 118:8, 133:15, 143:1, 143:3, 144:24, 145:20, 145:24, 151:25, 156:3, 168:22, 169:7, 169:8, 169:15, 169:25, 170:1, 170:10,</p>	<p>173:8, 209:9, 226:13, 226:21, 228:5, 230:20, 238:21, 282:13, 326:14, 332:10, 332:14, 335:12, 353:24, 354:2 Exhibit [30] - 39:10, 39:16, 45:2, 65:21, 67:22, 87:22, 92:24, 93:10, 93:13, 99:25, 134:8, 134:15, 145:13, 155:24, 156:11, 159:14, 169:25, 170:6, 173:7, 209:7, 230:25, 265:19, 282:8, 282:18, 307:7, 307:17, 326:5, 326:15, 332:15, 332:24 exhibited [1] - 333:17 exhibits [13] - 11:18, 11:20, 11:21, 11:23, 11:24, 12:3, 12:4, 25:19, 25:20, 26:6, 92:18, 335:14 EXHIBITS [3] - 9:2, 11:17, 13:3 Exhibits [4] - 26:3, 39:4, 173:20, 267:1 exist [2] - 65:16, 218:25 existed [2] - 364:11, 364:12 existing [12] - 55:12, 59:5, 59:10, 59:11, 59:16, 59:17, 60:1, 105:23, 116:15, 165:5, 179:3, 200:20 exists [1] - 97:5 expect [20] - 48:17, 61:17, 64:2, 64:4, 64:5, 64:7, 64:8, 76:4, 104:19, 130:7, 157:1, 158:8, 159:1, 179:15, 179:18, 198:14, 285:5, 327:5, 333:16, 367:23 expectations [3] - 64:20, 190:21, 300:10 expected [7] - 52:14, 59:21, 143:15, 157:9, 190:22, 269:12, 367:18 Expected [1] - 13:21 expecting [1] - 134:24 expects [1] - 324:14 expeditious [1] - 322:12 expend [1] - 255:8 expenditure [5] - 163:15, 164:8, 164:16, 164:23, 165:2 expenditures [5] - 57:17, 157:8, 164:4, 165:15, 166:8 expense [19] - 13:20, 27:14, 32:5, 41:16, 54:1, 130:13, 130:17, 268:7, 268:24, 271:25, 272:5, 272:25, 273:7, 276:4, 284:20, 285:1, 286:3, 286:13,</p>
--	---	--	--

<p>287:12 expenses [16] - 34:22, 35:4, 35:8, 35:13, 35:14, 35:15, 35:16, 35:17, 35:18, 79:25, 80:9, 88:12, 138:10, 143:9, 243:15, 337:6 expensive [6] - 107:25, 109:19, 111:24, 112:6, 138:6, 138:7 experience [25] - 60:3, 85:12, 120:3, 140:21, 176:20, 182:5, 182:10, 182:23, 184:18, 185:12, 185:13, 185:23, 186:1, 190:15, 195:2, 195:8, 204:18, 217:24, 218:1, 218:19, 228:11, 255:11, 267:11, 353:2, 367:22 experienced [11] - 60:25, 61:11, 176:12, 176:14, 182:3, 182:15, 182:20, 184:10, 194:7, 194:9, 194:17 experiences [3] - 180:10, 189:15, 212:22 experiencing [2] - 207:12, 317:12 expert [9] - 73:23, 110:20, 126:6, 138:22, 149:23, 227:17, 243:8, 246:17, 256:14 expertise [2] - 97:4, 246:23 explain [36] - 28:23, 32:7, 35:23, 40:10, 42:9, 64:2, 73:3, 101:23, 102:4, 166:7, 178:7, 182:1, 205:12, 215:3, 215:8, 220:8, 221:1, 225:3, 230:15, 233:21, 233:23, 244:22, 245:21, 268:15, 268:18, 308:2, 308:6, 313:22, 315:17, 346:6, 347:8, 348:23, 352:17, 359:7, 364:18, 365:11 explained [5] - 175:10, 221:9, 227:4, 315:6, 348:2 explaining [1] - 193:11 explains [6] - 31:20, 32:19, 269:4, 311:21, 347:2, 373:14 explanation [4] - 88:9, 207:18, 347:3, 366:21 explicitly [1] - 371:13 explore [3] - 89:8, 89:14, 151:20 express [2] - 35:6, 232:24 expressed [3] - 49:5, 103:6, 318:17 expressly [3] - 31:9, 267:25, 270:5</p>	<p>extend [6] - 25:3, 81:2, 143:24, 174:23, 197:25, 198:18 extended [10] - 174:17, 174:25, 176:9, 177:10, 177:12, 177:14, 177:17, 178:9, 200:12, 200:16 extension [4] - 46:8, 176:5, 177:15, 198:5 extensions [3] - 40:20, 203:13, 203:15 extensive [8] - 61:12, 61:15, 62:7, 71:2, 80:16, 114:5, 157:5, 158:1 extent [11] - 64:16, 94:24, 127:17, 162:23, 219:13, 231:25, 305:1, 317:9, 329:25, 347:16, 364:7 external [5] - 122:1, 186:1, 293:13, 293:16, 293:25 extra [2] - 290:18, 290:20 extract [1] - 278:23 extreme [3] - 76:18, 368:23, 368:24 extremely [5] - 110:12, 183:9, 191:22, 200:15, 207:9</p>	<p>343:14, 351:25, 352:10, 354:3, 357:24, 360:5, 376:20 factor [30] - 41:3, 118:5, 132:17, 143:16, 198:1, 200:10, 225:15, 225:20, 234:14, 234:16, 234:25, 235:3, 248:4, 248:6, 257:14, 258:2, 259:19, 275:7, 301:18, 311:14, 320:1, 320:3, 322:17, 338:1, 339:8, 342:16, 348:18, 356:2, 369:8 factors [6] - 122:2, 199:5, 234:24, 315:9, 315:24, 318:1 facts [8] - 20:23, 73:2, 85:13, 85:21, 267:17, 271:9, 342:14 Fahn [1] - 17:17 failure [6] - 60:17, 60:25, 61:12, 157:18, 158:2, 158:4 failures [2] - 159:23, 160:6 fair [9] - 44:16, 75:10, 127:22, 186:11, 197:15, 342:16, 361:18, 362:17, 376:12 fairly [9] - 164:23, 165:1, 191:15, 191:16, 211:20, 288:21, 348:18, 349:17, 354:10 faith [1] - 22:22 fall [2] - 61:1, 64:10 familiar [28] - 58:19, 58:21, 60:19, 65:15, 67:25, 69:21, 74:23, 83:15, 90:12, 165:23, 166:5, 192:21, 193:1, 219:3, 219:6, 219:13, 224:19, 233:10, 282:21, 292:18, 316:9, 322:2, 346:9, 369:11, 369:14, 370:17, 371:22, 372:21 familiarize [1] - 319:6 far [12] - 20:19, 25:19, 72:4, 78:5, 123:6, 134:3, 196:22, 197:22, 202:4, 234:19, 314:18, 372:6 fare [1] - 68:15 Fargo [6] - 2:11, 19:2, 114:20, 167:18, 168:12, 169:18 farmland [2] - 289:17, 289:18 farms [10] - 57:19, 289:13, 292:11, 292:13, 292:23, 293:10, 293:15, 293:24, 294:22, 295:5 FASB [7] - 279:4, 280:2,</p>	<p>283:10, 284:19, 285:11, 300:1, 300:2 fashion [4] - 122:25, 178:15, 199:13, 241:10 fault [1] - 345:4 FCR [2] - 36:14, 53:12 feasibility [1] - 228:18 features [1] - 110:8 February [2] - 15:24, 66:10 federal [9] - 47:12, 198:1, 200:1, 202:13, 202:14, 202:16, 203:19, 275:21 federally [1] - 205:18 Fedorchak [42] - 3:7, 3:13, 3:18, 4:4, 4:8, 4:11, 4:16, 4:20, 5:5, 5:9, 5:13, 5:21, 6:12, 6:17, 6:23, 6:25, 7:10, 7:13, 7:17, 8:4, 8:10, 18:9, 18:11, 19:16, 20:9, 23:6, 38:7, 100:14, 118:22, 124:6, 150:8, 163:8, 166:18, 189:2, 243:5, 249:21, 261:24, 288:13, 292:10, 348:13, 360:24, 380:9 FEDORCHAK [31] - 2:3, 18:13, 38:9, 100:15, 100:17, 118:19, 150:9, 163:10, 166:15, 189:4, 197:2, 243:7, 249:17, 262:2, 263:23, 288:15, 290:24, 291:18, 291:21, 297:8, 321:2, 326:13, 326:17, 326:21, 343:25, 348:15, 350:22, 360:11, 380:7, 380:11, 381:25 Fedorchak's [1] - 13:23 feed [1] - 178:24 feedback [1] - 22:15 feeder [1] - 167:21 felony [2] - 37:19, 266:7 FERC [3] - 30:23, 270:16, 270:19 Fetch [10] - 3:20, 7:3, 16:7, 16:13, 18:14, 26:7, 27:25, 139:21, 141:15, 256:23 FETCH [247] - 1:22, 15:4, 16:15, 16:20, 16:25, 17:12, 17:18, 19:13, 22:9, 23:12, 26:3, 26:12, 27:20, 27:23, 28:1, 36:7, 37:3, 37:6, 37:9, 37:12, 38:1, 38:6, 38:14, 38:18, 45:1, 45:5, 45:9, 47:18, 48:1, 64:25, 65:4, 65:8, 65:19, 65:21, 67:13, 67:18, 67:22, 71:6, 71:11, 71:14, 83:18, 83:24, 84:3, 86:15, 87:4, 87:8, 87:15, 87:21, 91:17, 91:22, 92:6, 92:9, 92:17, 92:20,</p>
F			
	<p>face [1] - 57:13 faced [2] - 116:1, 187:5 facetious [1] - 362:10 facilities [21] - 106:5, 168:6, 174:16, 185:18, 186:7, 187:9, 195:23, 196:4, 200:24, 201:4, 202:22, 206:11, 272:25, 293:14, 298:4, 308:6, 308:15, 308:18, 311:23, 336:24, 351:19 facility [12] - 110:17, 157:15, 178:18, 185:8, 186:2, 194:17, 195:6, 198:2, 293:1, 300:20, 312:3, 312:4 facility's [1] - 202:18 facing [2] - 104:15, 176:12 fact [41] - 22:21, 29:1, 35:16, 37:19, 65:16, 68:23, 77:21, 99:16, 100:18, 101:20, 102:10, 109:23, 116:5, 116:10, 120:9, 125:22, 183:11, 196:1, 196:24, 207:10, 217:11, 236:24, 257:11, 266:6, 275:2, 275:11, 289:7, 319:23, 322:22, 328:9, 339:25, 342:12, 342:21, 342:25,</p>		

<p>93:5, 93:9, 93:13, 93:18, 94:14, 100:10, 118:21, 129:9, 133:14, 134:7, 134:12, 134:15, 139:19, 139:24, 141:4, 144:17, 144:21, 144:25, 145:6, 145:9, 145:15, 145:19, 150:2, 150:7, 150:10, 150:16, 152:2, 154:10, 154:14, 154:17, 154:19, 154:22, 155:1, 155:6, 155:10, 155:16, 155:20, 156:3, 159:8, 159:18, 161:7, 163:6, 166:17, 169:19, 169:22, 169:24, 170:5, 171:2, 171:6, 171:9, 171:12, 172:6, 172:12, 172:16, 172:21, 173:2, 173:6, 173:10, 176:25, 177:3, 181:11, 184:13, 187:23, 188:25, 197:4, 201:23, 203:4, 203:8, 204:5, 204:8, 204:10, 207:19, 207:22, 207:25, 208:2, 208:5, 208:8, 208:12, 208:18, 208:23, 209:4, 209:11, 213:13, 226:14, 226:18, 227:1, 228:6, 228:25, 229:12, 230:9, 230:24, 231:14, 232:6, 232:18, 233:1, 233:8, 243:3, 249:20, 256:9, 256:24, 257:2, 261:4, 261:23, 264:1, 264:4, 264:8, 264:15, 264:22, 264:25, 265:5, 265:18, 266:2, 266:15, 266:18, 271:12, 271:15, 272:19, 281:24, 282:4, 282:7, 282:10, 282:15, 282:17, 282:20, 288:7, 288:11, 289:25, 290:3, 291:23, 296:14, 303:25, 304:3, 305:8, 305:11, 305:14, 305:17, 306:5, 306:7, 306:11, 306:20, 306:24, 307:3, 312:18, 324:20, 330:5, 330:8, 330:12, 331:6, 331:18, 332:6, 332:9, 332:12, 332:17, 332:23, 333:11, 337:13, 338:19, 338:25, 339:24, 340:10, 340:16, 341:4, 341:18, 341:20, 342:2, 342:8, 344:4, 348:11, 350:18, 350:21, 360:13, 366:4, 370:7, 370:10, 370:13, 370:16, 370:20, 370:22, 373:5, 373:9, 377:12, 378:7, 380:3, 380:8, 382:2, 382:5,</p>	<p>383:7, 383:13, 383:16, 383:19, 383:21, 384:5, 384:9</p> <p>few [17] - 20:18, 23:8, 86:17, 86:20, 99:13, 99:19, 103:4, 108:25, 117:24, 131:5, 139:22, 141:19, 144:20, 160:9, 264:11, 269:16, 379:13</p> <p>few-minutes [1] - 264:11</p> <p>fewer [2] - 76:18, 114:6</p> <p>field [6] - 213:25, 214:12, 254:18, 275:13, 276:18, 278:21</p> <p>fifth [1] - 376:15</p> <p>Figure [1] - 142:1</p> <p>figure [10] - 77:23, 137:12, 168:25, 227:16, 236:5, 298:3, 349:12, 368:25, 371:24, 372:1</p> <p>figures [1] - 192:16</p> <p>file [5] - 18:3, 86:24, 90:2, 99:4, 375:6</p> <p>filed [31] - 15:9, 18:5, 33:7, 35:1, 78:22, 87:5, 87:16, 87:22, 88:25, 89:4, 89:16, 91:12, 91:17, 92:18, 92:24, 93:4, 93:10, 93:13, 99:3, 133:15, 134:10, 134:16, 168:22, 169:8, 169:15, 169:25, 170:1, 170:5, 173:22, 226:13, 230:20</p> <p>FILED [1] - 13:3</p> <p>filing [1] - 157:10</p> <p>filings [1] - 96:5</p> <p>filled [1] - 296:8</p> <p>filler [1] - 185:23</p> <p>filtered [1] - 359:18</p> <p>final [8] - 16:1, 20:10, 21:10, 27:10, 158:7, 227:22, 298:11, 322:7</p> <p>finalize [1] - 103:14</p> <p>finally [4] - 44:3, 207:1, 270:21, 311:17</p> <p>finance [1] - 246:18</p> <p>financial [27] - 40:15, 48:25, 52:14, 78:9, 78:14, 78:23, 84:25, 149:12, 149:15, 257:19, 269:6, 270:16, 270:18, 280:12, 280:16, 280:17, 280:21, 283:18, 286:16, 288:2, 290:25, 291:7, 298:19, 303:18, 303:20, 308:13</p> <p>Financial [2] - 12:19, 279:4</p> <p>financially [1] - 85:2</p> <p>findings [3] - 342:11, 342:14, 342:24</p> <p>fine [6] - 37:20, 93:5, 150:9, 181:25, 266:8, 327:23</p>	<p>finest [1] - 124:5</p> <p>finish [6] - 46:4, 46:5, 46:8, 136:11, 295:20, 341:6</p> <p>fire [1] - 206:19</p> <p>fired [2] - 111:19, 136:19</p> <p>firm [2] - 293:13, 293:16</p> <p>first [62] - 19:19, 22:17, 30:4, 30:15, 37:23, 37:25, 38:22, 39:21, 41:15, 55:1, 59:4, 66:4, 92:23, 97:5, 99:5, 99:6, 102:7, 110:22, 117:20, 119:19, 146:15, 155:23, 156:6, 157:16, 157:21, 160:6, 160:22, 167:17, 173:14, 177:7, 178:9, 180:3, 180:13, 185:3, 187:6, 187:7, 196:2, 204:12, 205:15, 209:15, 234:25, 244:11, 266:21, 267:13, 268:9, 285:17, 286:7, 297:21, 298:2, 300:13, 300:21, 300:24, 307:11, 313:18, 316:23, 329:3, 342:11, 343:18, 345:14, 347:10, 362:25</p> <p>firsthand [1] - 206:5</p> <p>fiscal [2] - 216:2, 249:5</p> <p>fit [2] - 102:5, 205:19</p> <p>fits [1] - 100:24</p> <p>five [35] - 17:20, 25:10, 26:18, 28:10, 37:9, 37:20, 82:19, 82:21, 83:22, 97:9, 99:21, 131:4, 133:18, 163:15, 164:15, 190:23, 196:19, 198:15, 265:10, 266:8, 271:1, 271:5, 296:3, 305:17, 305:18, 330:7, 330:8, 341:16, 341:18, 358:16, 359:21, 376:13, 376:14, 376:17, 384:11</p> <p>five-minute [2] - 330:7, 341:16</p> <p>five-sixths [2] - 358:16, 359:21</p> <p>five-year [4] - 82:19, 82:21, 164:15, 271:1</p> <p>fixed [13] - 19:7, 49:7, 76:9, 76:18, 76:22, 115:25, 219:25, 239:9, 309:8, 309:9, 310:4, 336:23, 364:17</p> <p>fixed-income [1] - 115:25</p> <p>flare [1] - 128:18</p> <p>flare-up [1] - 128:18</p> <p>flatter [1] - 56:8</p> <p>fleet [2] - 29:5, 315:7</p> <p>flesh [1] - 127:25</p> <p>fleshed [1] - 343:2</p> <p>flexibility [2] - 228:2, 328:14</p> <p>flexible [1] - 217:20</p>	<p>flip [1] - 299:4</p> <p>flipping [1] - 69:12</p> <p>Floor [1] - 2:7</p> <p>flow [1] - 104:12</p> <p>fluid [1] - 85:22</p> <p>focus [5] - 162:24, 165:3, 165:8, 254:2, 256:19</p> <p>focused [9] - 20:25, 156:23, 158:20, 167:18, 191:2, 220:15, 244:20, 254:3, 279:13</p> <p>focuses [1] - 311:19</p> <p>folks [1] - 194:25</p> <p>follow [19] - 24:16, 131:20, 141:19, 151:23, 153:16, 154:11, 202:20, 203:6, 204:5, 207:23, 208:2, 208:3, 233:4, 238:20, 265:14, 279:18, 292:9, 316:19, 364:3</p> <p>follow-up [6] - 141:19, 154:11, 204:5, 207:23, 208:3, 238:20</p> <p>followed [2] - 284:5, 363:11</p> <p>following [3] - 24:25, 95:8, 142:22</p> <p>follows [8] - 15:3, 29:16, 38:23, 156:7, 173:15, 209:16, 266:22, 307:12</p> <p>followup [2] - 112:9, 240:20</p> <p>font [1] - 65:6</p> <p>footnote [1] - 338:7</p> <p>footprint [2] - 115:9, 335:19</p> <p>FOR [2] - 2:13, 2:18</p> <p>force [1] - 191:13</p> <p>forced [4] - 317:25, 355:12, 377:4, 381:7</p> <p>Forecast [1] - 12:20</p> <p>forecast [5] - 55:20, 80:8, 83:4, 83:7, 96:2</p> <p>forecasted [1] - 80:7</p> <p>forecasting [4] - 56:8, 83:8, 83:9, 96:2</p> <p>Forecasts [1] - 12:19</p> <p>forecasts [2] - 78:10, 164:6</p> <p>forensic [1] - 62:7</p> <p>forget [2] - 21:22, 135:4</p> <p>forgive [1] - 148:17</p> <p>Forks [10] - 13:9, 66:12, 66:19, 167:15, 168:1, 168:10, 169:3, 169:16, 170:11, 170:18</p> <p>Form [2] - 11:11, 270:16</p> <p>form [8] - 13:10, 26:9, 222:4, 222:7, 226:10, 226:14, 241:5, 324:15</p> <p>format [1] - 325:24</p> <p>former [1] - 366:20</p> <p>forms [1] - 242:15</p> <p>formula [3] - 361:3, 372:2</p>
--	---	--	--

<p>formulas [1] - 128:16</p> <p>forth [6] - 20:24, 22:24, 69:12, 116:7, 246:22, 272:9</p> <p>forthcoming [1] - 105:6</p> <p>forward [25] - 18:14, 19:4, 19:10, 21:14, 22:7, 23:8, 28:22, 41:22, 44:21, 48:18, 94:23, 124:1, 124:17, 124:21, 164:5, 164:9, 168:9, 199:19, 233:6, 238:21, 280:1, 298:10, 298:11, 298:15, 303:1</p> <p>Foss [14] - 9:14, 10:21, 67:2, 71:24, 115:21, 155:5, 155:6, 155:7, 156:10, 156:17, 159:13, 169:22, 171:5, 172:9</p> <p>FOSS [2] - 3:10, 156:5</p> <p>fossil [4] - 109:24, 124:13, 189:11, 189:19</p> <p>fossil-fueled [1] - 109:24</p> <p>four [16] - 30:17, 52:20, 56:15, 90:7, 90:21, 91:7, 91:8, 107:11, 114:7, 120:7, 194:25, 195:18, 264:13, 311:13, 318:20, 376:14</p> <p>four-year [2] - 194:25, 195:18</p> <p>fourth [3] - 20:20, 88:8, 347:8</p> <p>fourth-grade [2] - 88:8, 347:8</p> <p>fourths [1] - 146:23</p> <p>frame [8] - 106:14, 106:25, 107:7, 129:20, 131:7, 135:1, 135:4, 200:8</p> <p>framework [1] - 346:23</p> <p>frankly [3] - 182:17, 187:14, 194:9</p> <p>FRED [1] - 11:14</p> <p>free [1] - 174:20</p> <p>frequency [1] - 41:21</p> <p>front [14] - 46:22, 51:10, 60:11, 67:25, 81:14, 83:16, 93:4, 124:3, 149:11, 156:10, 330:19, 338:10, 339:9, 342:5</p> <p>front-line [1] - 81:14</p> <p>frugally [1] - 113:13</p> <p>fuel [17] - 43:7, 43:10, 43:14, 43:20, 44:22, 53:3, 69:24, 70:2, 70:20, 107:17, 166:1, 171:24, 191:20, 206:21, 206:22, 337:5</p> <p>fueled [5] - 54:23, 55:13, 60:22, 109:24, 136:23</p> <p>fuels [2] - 124:13, 189:12</p> <p>Fukushima [7] - 175:24, 186:25, 190:1, 190:15,</p>	<p>204:21, 204:25, 205:15</p> <p>fulfill [1] - 82:7</p> <p>fulfilling [3] - 138:4, 138:18, 139:6</p> <p>full [14] - 20:13, 40:11, 41:22, 46:5, 88:21, 103:16, 104:22, 136:12, 138:16, 149:1, 214:2, 227:20, 246:8, 246:10</p> <p>fullest [1] - 82:24</p> <p>fully [4] - 128:22, 149:21, 296:6, 296:8</p> <p>fun [1] - 249:25</p> <p>function [2] - 121:8, 157:2</p> <p>functioning [2] - 29:7, 179:8</p> <p>functions [2] - 148:4, 274:4</p> <p>fund [6] - 88:13, 128:21, 128:22, 128:25, 130:12, 256:15</p> <p>fundamental [8] - 29:10, 35:11, 36:20, 118:1, 123:9, 135:6, 157:20, 372:17</p> <p>funding [8] - 13:22, 133:2, 234:14, 234:15, 235:3, 257:14, 257:21, 259:19</p> <p>funds [5] - 77:1, 129:19, 132:23, 147:20, 258:14</p> <p>FURTHER [6] - 171:13, 203:9, 261:6, 262:1, 380:10, 382:6</p> <p>furthermore [1] - 211:6</p> <p>future [53] - 32:17, 32:25, 33:1, 34:1, 35:4, 41:17, 41:21, 47:14, 48:20, 54:17, 55:21, 56:9, 59:5, 60:13, 64:9, 82:22, 88:20, 96:3, 96:11, 97:12, 100:21, 101:7, 101:9, 101:18, 105:8, 105:21, 106:3, 106:5, 108:6, 108:11, 108:23, 110:3, 110:7, 111:10, 113:3, 121:21, 126:9, 128:11, 128:13, 135:10, 135:17, 142:17, 142:18, 143:13, 167:2, 199:9, 267:22, 270:9, 275:3, 276:4, 284:1, 284:16, 298:23</p>	<p>134:19, 136:5, 136:23, 164:25, 279:7</p> <p>gauge [2] - 75:12, 222:21</p> <p>gavel [1] - 306:9</p> <p>General [1] - 2:6</p> <p>general [39] - 28:16, 29:25, 41:5, 41:21, 44:9, 57:24, 75:13, 103:10, 103:17, 104:6, 104:8, 117:9, 120:15, 162:3, 188:17, 214:21, 215:8, 216:20, 243:15, 249:1, 255:25, 261:12, 268:13, 271:7, 272:10, 272:11, 273:3, 314:16, 329:14, 331:13, 335:14, 340:22, 344:12, 344:23, 344:24, 345:6, 345:10, 349:3, 367:23</p> <p>generalizing [1] - 339:11</p> <p>generally [14] - 29:2, 99:10, 109:12, 112:6, 131:3, 162:21, 214:21, 216:2, 234:3, 304:9, 304:10, 329:7, 349:11, 350:12</p> <p>generate [2] - 136:24, 175:8</p> <p>generated [2] - 56:22, 268:16</p> <p>generating [2] - 61:19, 174:24</p> <p>generation [14] - 29:6, 56:25, 105:5, 105:9, 106:5, 108:4, 110:13, 110:17, 113:9, 192:14, 315:7, 335:7, 349:7, 363:5</p> <p>generator [3] - 61:7, 61:11, 61:13</p> <p>gentleman [1] - 240:20</p> <p>geographically [1] - 202:5</p> <p>GEORGE [1] - 6:15</p> <p>Gingery [2] - 141:12, 264:10</p> <p>gist [1] - 265:13</p> <p>given [8] - 86:2, 131:23, 179:18, 185:13, 205:25, 221:21, 285:2, 312:2</p> <p>glad [1] - 151:20</p> <p>glean [1] - 292:21</p> <p>globally [1] - 176:13</p> <p>gloves [1] - 116:19</p> <p>goal [10] - 21:11, 25:6, 124:10, 124:12, 156:25, 324:12, 325:15, 367:7, 367:8</p> <p>goals [13] - 149:4, 149:8, 149:14, 211:9, 212:10, 213:7, 214:13, 215:7, 216:6, 234:3, 234:5, 319:24, 367:9</p> <p>goodness [1] - 342:23</p> <p>Googling [1] - 19:21</p> <p>gosh [2] - 357:14, 375:12</p>	<p>governed [1] - 202:16</p> <p>government [2] - 205:2, 205:19</p> <p>grace [1] - 294:23</p> <p>grade [4] - 88:8, 245:8, 245:10, 347:8</p> <p>grades [1] - 245:1</p> <p>graduate [1] - 194:25</p> <p>graduates [1] - 196:2</p> <p>Grand [10] - 13:9, 66:12, 66:18, 167:15, 168:1, 168:10, 169:3, 169:16, 170:10, 170:18</p> <p>grant [3] - 184:17, 184:18, 198:20</p> <p>granted [3] - 177:13, 179:17, 179:19</p> <p>graph [3] - 130:21, 333:3, 333:17</p> <p>Graph [1] - 11:14</p> <p>gravitated [1] - 378:19</p> <p>gray [1] - 345:14</p> <p>great [11] - 94:12, 110:6, 118:19, 137:1, 137:19, 138:8, 169:15, 182:9, 194:22, 198:9, 251:24</p> <p>Greater [4] - 12:9, 145:2, 146:3, 146:19</p> <p>greater [7] - 55:1, 60:4, 98:1, 245:23, 346:19, 353:25, 375:1</p> <p>greatly [2] - 327:2, 327:3</p> <p>grid [8] - 21:9, 49:16, 61:18, 71:25, 72:2, 72:6, 114:19, 136:4</p> <p>grocery [1] - 279:7</p> <p>ground [7] - 79:23, 120:1, 277:13, 278:8, 279:11, 289:16, 372:7</p> <p>grounded [1] - 125:23</p> <p>groundwater [1] - 278:6</p> <p>Group [1] - 152:8</p> <p>group [7] - 165:18, 168:4, 235:25, 237:2, 253:16, 254:10, 278:17</p> <p>groups [3] - 67:5, 133:6, 364:4</p> <p>grow [1] - 131:22</p> <p>growing [2] - 124:7, 300:14</p> <p>grown [1] - 130:24</p> <p>growth [13] - 18:25, 41:3, 54:17, 56:3, 56:8, 56:17, 56:23, 56:24, 76:7, 76:10, 83:10, 133:19, 134:25</p> <p>guarantee [1] - 358:21</p> <p>guess [37] - 58:6, 62:6, 74:25, 78:14, 79:24, 80:5, 100:7, 112:20, 126:5, 147:19, 148:10, 167:5, 171:18, 180:24, 202:25,</p>
	G		
<p>gain [4] - 115:12, 185:11, 241:24, 300:3</p> <p>game [2] - 99:18, 183:7</p> <p>gap [2] - 185:23, 345:8</p> <p>garbage [1] - 276:21</p> <p>gas [14] - 54:23, 55:13, 96:1, 96:11, 99:17, 106:12, 107:4, 111:18, 116:13,</p>			

<p>220:20, 223:2, 226:23, 227:14, 227:22, 230:3, 236:18, 237:19, 238:14, 240:10, 251:8, 314:4, 322:9, 325:23, 339:3, 345:11, 363:11, 366:21, 370:6, 376:14, 376:15, 379:3</p> <p>guidance [7] - 314:14, 314:16, 329:10, 329:14, 344:15, 344:25, 345:10</p> <p>guide [5] - 75:3, 85:13, 98:14, 133:8, 133:12</p> <p>guided [3] - 72:17, 77:3, 118:1</p> <p>guidelines [4] - 160:4, 220:7, 344:12, 369:25</p> <p>guru [1] - 366:3</p> <p>guy [1] - 134:2</p> <p>guys [6] - 180:25, 191:5, 195:10, 203:12, 217:17, 358:23</p>	<p>218:24, 297:10</p> <p>hearing [18] - 15:6, 15:8, 16:6, 17:11, 19:10, 24:11, 24:15, 26:21, 27:10, 37:13, 78:5, 92:12, 92:23, 141:7, 168:9, 266:3, 306:11, 378:13</p> <p>HEARING [1] - 1:12</p> <p>hearings [2] - 23:1, 306:8</p> <p>Hearings [1] - 16:5</p> <p>heavily [1] - 353:11</p> <p>hedge [1] - 121:21</p> <p>held [4] - 131:3, 218:8, 250:20, 295:4</p> <p>hello [1] - 312:24</p> <p>help [24] - 40:11, 41:21, 56:18, 60:10, 79:17, 85:1, 85:13, 94:8, 101:2, 112:21, 185:1, 193:20, 195:16, 198:18, 199:14, 206:14, 210:9, 211:20, 212:19, 217:18, 242:9, 288:16, 290:6, 348:25</p> <p>helpful [4] - 104:25, 113:4, 295:1, 341:1</p> <p>helping [1] - 76:22</p> <p>helps [7] - 76:5, 76:6, 76:8, 76:21, 105:20, 245:21, 291:3</p> <p>herein [1] - 15:1</p> <p>hesitant [1] - 346:11</p> <p>hesitate [3] - 314:12, 329:23, 333:18</p> <p>Heuer [9] - 10:12, 10:13, 11:7, 163:23, 172:3, 253:3, 261:20, 263:10, 379:25</p> <p>HEUER [2] - 5:18, 6:10</p> <p>Heuer's [1] - 157:12</p> <p>high [22] - 47:9, 58:12, 64:18, 71:25, 72:6, 86:11, 95:2, 102:21, 102:25, 104:2, 110:19, 158:25, 182:12, 207:8, 246:3, 261:11, 311:23, 326:7, 341:24, 346:25, 368:22, 374:10</p> <p>High [1] - 116:11</p> <p>high-voltage [7] - 47:9, 58:12, 71:25, 72:6, 102:21, 102:25, 104:2</p> <p>higher [28] - 48:4, 54:20, 56:22, 56:25, 94:22, 110:13, 112:4, 117:16, 125:12, 126:3, 131:24, 179:2, 180:6, 196:25, 239:23, 240:5, 241:4, 274:18, 275:2, 276:4, 276:9, 280:25, 281:1, 304:12, 310:16, 310:18, 369:8</p>	<p>higher-cost [2] - 56:22, 110:13</p> <p>higher-priced [1] - 56:25</p> <p>highest [7] - 41:2, 69:15, 69:24, 70:1, 70:20, 106:16, 351:5</p> <p>highlight [1] - 30:3</p> <p>highly [4] - 64:7, 176:18, 210:8, 213:9</p> <p>highly-qualified [1] - 176:18</p> <p>highly-skilled [1] - 210:8</p> <p>hinting [1] - 293:20</p> <p>hire [1] - 213:2</p> <p>hiring [3] - 194:7, 253:12, 254:1</p> <p>historical [17] - 35:3, 35:9, 78:5, 79:18, 79:19, 224:22, 270:24, 271:2, 285:5, 317:13, 317:17, 318:4, 353:10, 353:17, 354:2, 368:17, 377:9</p> <p>historically [4] - 235:13, 308:21, 317:17, 318:13</p> <p>history [4] - 236:1, 263:21, 281:5, 346:10</p> <p>hit [2] - 38:1, 135:1</p> <p>hitting [1] - 109:22</p> <p>hmm [9] - 108:24, 123:14, 195:10, 196:6, 262:5, 289:6, 350:9, 351:22, 352:12</p> <p>hold [4] - 139:24, 210:1, 236:19, 260:20</p> <p>holding [5] - 52:3, 52:18, 122:13, 122:14, 356:3</p> <p>holds [3] - 18:11, 108:23, 381:11</p> <p>HON [1] - 1:22</p> <p>honestly [3] - 20:5, 152:25, 294:21</p> <p>Honor [123] - 16:21, 17:3, 19:15, 22:8, 22:12, 26:2, 27:19, 28:14, 37:5, 37:11, 45:4, 45:7, 45:10, 64:22, 65:20, 67:12, 67:14, 67:20, 83:23, 84:7, 86:13, 87:19, 93:11, 93:12, 93:16, 94:13, 118:23, 129:12, 134:14, 134:18, 139:18, 144:20, 145:1, 145:21, 150:1, 150:13, 152:1, 154:9, 154:13, 154:16, 154:18, 155:4, 156:2, 159:10, 161:6, 166:19, 169:15, 170:3, 170:4, 170:7, 171:1, 171:4, 171:8, 171:11, 173:9, 177:4, 187:22, 197:6, 202:1, 203:3, 203:5, 207:21, 207:24, 208:7, 208:16, 209:10, 213:15,</p>	<p>226:7, 226:17, 226:22, 226:23, 231:2, 231:25, 233:2, 249:22, 257:1, 257:3, 261:3, 264:3, 264:6, 264:20, 265:8, 266:19, 271:13, 281:22, 281:25, 282:14, 282:16, 282:19, 288:6, 291:25, 296:18, 304:2, 305:7, 305:10, 306:6, 306:17, 307:9, 312:16, 312:20, 331:4, 331:7, 331:15, 332:1, 332:8, 332:15, 332:19, 337:12, 338:20, 339:25, 340:18, 341:12, 342:1, 360:15, 373:8, 377:11, 377:14, 378:6, 380:6, 382:4, 383:11, 383:15, 383:17</p> <p>hook [1] - 357:3</p> <p>hope [1] - 92:11</p> <p>hopefully [1] - 76:7</p> <p>hopes [1] - 324:7</p> <p>hot [4] - 107:16, 131:23, 352:1, 353:16</p> <p>hour [28] - 26:24, 27:5, 66:18, 69:14, 69:15, 70:22, 92:15, 137:23, 159:23, 202:6, 202:7, 315:23, 317:1, 317:12, 317:15, 323:14, 324:1, 353:9, 353:17, 354:22, 355:2, 355:8, 355:10, 377:9, 378:21, 381:22</p> <p>hourly [5] - 309:18, 350:15, 350:16, 351:7, 365:10</p> <p>hours [14] - 15:17, 66:11, 119:4, 170:11, 217:20, 309:23, 315:16, 315:19, 316:12, 316:14, 317:12, 377:2, 377:8</p> <p>House [1] - 146:24</p> <p>housed [1] - 59:9</p> <p>HR [4] - 216:20, 246:16, 260:14, 260:24</p> <p>huge [4] - 56:5, 246:13, 247:18, 356:5</p> <p>hugely [1] - 105:17</p> <p>human [3] - 121:7, 211:17, 243:8</p> <p>humans [1] - 189:18</p> <p>hundred [9] - 137:17, 325:13, 357:3, 357:8, 359:5, 362:3, 379:5, 380:12, 380:20</p> <p>hung [1] - 203:12</p> <p>hurdles [1] - 237:17</p> <p>hurt [1] - 357:2</p> <p>HUSO [1] - 6:5</p> <p>Huso [4] - 10:16, 10:18,</p>
H			
<p>Hagen [1] - 362:24</p> <p>half [6] - 27:5, 99:6, 113:2, 185:10, 334:18, 344:13</p> <p>halfway [1] - 83:14</p> <p>hammer [1] - 203:17</p> <p>hand [10] - 38:4, 69:10, 69:13, 70:6, 85:21, 155:11, 172:22, 208:24, 266:10, 307:1</p> <p>handed [4] - 67:15, 145:2, 282:1, 331:8</p> <p>handle [1] - 264:18</p> <p>handled [1] - 75:6</p> <p>hands [1] - 18:1</p> <p>happy [1] - 283:13</p> <p>hard [8] - 18:15, 22:19, 100:23, 110:14, 125:7, 136:7, 237:17, 240:11</p> <p>hazardous [3] - 278:2, 288:19, 288:23</p> <p>head [5] - 27:20, 93:23, 295:22, 327:11, 378:14</p> <p>headquarters [6] - 58:25, 59:1, 59:6, 59:10, 59:11, 59:16</p> <p>heads [1] - 284:25</p> <p>health [5] - 176:1, 205:20, 225:18, 227:16, 243:21</p> <p>healthy [1] - 85:2</p> <p>hear [8] - 49:4, 49:10, 125:15, 283:16, 370:7, 370:11, 370:20, 370:22</p> <p>heard [7] - 58:24, 127:25, 171:18, 204:19, 205:1,</p>			

<p>11:10, 351:8 Hydro [1] - 381:15 hypothetical [1] - 367:3 hypothetically [1] - 225:11</p>	<p>imprudently [1] - 362:13 in-depth [2] - 345:7, 345:9 in-plant [1] - 195:9 inability [1] - 211:18 inaccurate [1] - 91:13 inappropriate [5] - 33:25, 169:9, 270:22, 310:21, 312:13 Inc [3] - 250:14, 251:1, 251:16 incentive [87] - 35:20, 35:24, 50:16, 74:3, 74:5, 74:12, 74:20, 74:21, 142:23, 148:22, 149:17, 149:21, 162:15, 163:4, 188:6, 210:5, 210:19, 211:1, 211:6, 211:11, 211:14, 211:19, 211:25, 212:4, 212:10, 212:13, 212:18, 213:5, 214:5, 214:12, 214:15, 214:20, 215:4, 215:9, 215:10, 215:12, 219:2, 219:21, 220:1, 220:5, 220:18, 220:25, 221:4, 222:10, 222:14, 223:1, 223:16, 223:25, 224:12, 225:1, 225:5, 231:5, 233:22, 234:11, 234:17, 235:9, 235:11, 235:19, 235:21, 236:10, 236:14, 237:10, 237:16, 238:1, 238:13, 238:24, 239:4, 239:20, 240:3, 241:2, 241:14, 244:9, 247:14, 248:6, 248:8, 255:1, 257:21, 257:22, 258:5, 258:13, 258:16, 259:3, 259:6, 259:20, 261:11, 261:14, 262:10 incentives [10] - 50:8, 50:11, 212:6, 220:22, 238:1, 239:10, 239:11, 241:5, 241:6, 243:19 incident [2] - 187:1, 187:5 include [9] - 35:7, 40:20, 105:25, 142:25, 143:20, 157:8, 164:24, 251:8, 376:1 included [20] - 36:11, 100:25, 101:1, 126:18, 128:16, 142:20, 158:23, 163:16, 163:17, 232:3, 263:2, 263:3, 267:15, 286:13, 313:22, 329:22, 347:18, 347:19, 347:22, 376:2 includes [8] - 29:4, 46:7, 81:7, 105:10, 143:22, 156:21, 314:7, 314:22 including [14] - 16:2, 32:2,</p>	<p>47:8, 47:16, 158:19, 185:6, 188:22, 216:22, 225:5, 269:13, 281:6, 293:15, 293:17, 334:18 income [5] - 19:7, 115:25, 285:2, 285:8, 300:6 incomes [1] - 49:7 incomplete [1] - 334:7 inconsistencies [1] - 360:4 inconsistency [3] - 360:8, 367:11, 372:6 inconsistent [4] - 29:20, 34:10, 267:20, 371:19 Incorporated [1] - 308:1 incorrect [2] - 267:18, 271:10 incorrectly [1] - 39:13 increase [43] - 15:10, 15:13, 15:16, 15:20, 15:21, 15:22, 19:3, 40:15, 49:5, 62:4, 103:19, 104:8, 104:15, 108:15, 116:2, 160:3, 178:16, 179:2, 179:4, 179:6, 179:10, 179:24, 180:3, 180:14, 211:13, 211:14, 224:17, 238:7, 238:8, 239:19, 246:12, 248:17, 248:19, 260:2, 260:22, 271:5, 272:15, 272:16, 275:6, 276:3, 381:12, 381:16, 381:17 Increase [1] - 1:6 increased [7] - 105:19, 116:13, 176:3, 176:13, 186:16, 268:17, 274:10 increases [5] - 104:16, 142:17, 142:18, 190:6, 272:4 increasing [6] - 52:10, 174:24, 214:18, 273:8, 275:10, 275:13 increment [1] - 180:7 incremental [1] - 30:8 incur [8] - 50:12, 53:10, 72:21, 80:12, 127:18, 157:9, 354:15, 377:3 incurred [16] - 36:23, 46:4, 84:18, 175:14, 309:10, 309:16, 325:13, 336:24, 355:20, 355:21, 357:4, 362:4, 362:13, 366:17, 371:17, 380:13 indeed [1] - 62:3 independent [2] - 175:20, 347:12 Independent [1] - 110:25 independently [1] - 199:25 Index [2] - 9:4, 11:12 index [6] - 334:15, 335:3, 335:5, 335:21, 335:25,</p>	<p>336:5 indexes [1] - 336:10 indicate [1] - 374:8 indicated [2] - 140:13, 271:4 indicates [2] - 147:11, 158:2 indication [1] - 375:12 indicative [1] - 375:9 indicator [3] - 164:22, 234:2, 334:9 indicators [4] - 221:20, 234:7, 234:8, 241:13 individual [18] - 163:2, 210:6, 215:19, 215:22, 215:23, 216:4, 216:6, 222:22, 234:9, 235:2, 236:23, 245:7, 259:22, 260:16, 274:15, 277:23, 296:4 individual's [2] - 216:1, 259:25 individually [1] - 219:19 individuals [6] - 17:22, 49:7, 78:1, 228:15, 234:13, 236:22 individual [1] - 123:12 industry [16] - 176:11, 180:10, 182:3, 182:6, 189:15, 190:22, 194:10, 196:7, 210:22, 212:24, 214:16, 218:23, 240:25, 255:25, 279:6 inefficient [1] - 138:5 inexpensive [2] - 30:11, 343:8 inextricably [1] - 233:14 infiltrate [1] - 195:25 inflated [1] - 298:10 influence [2] - 62:13, 277:23 influenced [1] - 353:10 influencing [2] - 132:17, 200:24 inform [3] - 37:15, 118:12, 266:5 information [43] - 22:18, 22:23, 24:9, 39:13, 40:15, 46:21, 58:21, 60:14, 65:16, 71:7, 83:13, 83:16, 86:24, 91:11, 95:16, 98:13, 118:17, 130:3, 131:10, 180:21, 181:14, 181:16, 212:21, 223:13, 223:14, 227:21, 228:4, 228:15, 228:21, 229:2, 230:16, 230:22, 240:10, 240:17, 240:19, 240:23, 247:5, 270:18, 286:12, 293:21, 341:25, 342:4, 344:13 informed [3] - 77:12, 96:24, 121:1 ingenuity [1] - 372:11</p>
I			
<p>icon [1] - 147:11 idea [3] - 161:14, 351:18, 364:7 identified [11] - 16:24, 17:20, 17:21, 25:10, 60:2, 107:3, 228:1, 229:2, 267:16, 297:22 identify [13] - 17:9, 39:8, 49:14, 81:24, 91:19, 95:6, 155:2, 155:23, 172:13, 228:3, 228:21, 233:5, 323:20 identifying [3] - 24:20, 271:9, 347:25 ignored [1] - 33:5 ignores [1] - 310:23 II [1] - 6:15 Illona [6] - 17:14, 93:19, 294:7, 340:15, 340:18, 382:8 ILLONA [1] - 2:21 illustrate [1] - 263:8 illustration [1] - 76:17 imagination [1] - 372:12 immediately [1] - 114:24 impact [17] - 31:21, 41:10, 41:13, 44:6, 56:16, 88:23, 103:7, 104:4, 104:5, 129:4, 163:1, 183:21, 217:1, 217:10, 236:22, 311:7, 364:6 impacted [2] - 66:13, 236:25 implement [4] - 116:9, 190:23, 207:11, 213:4 implemented [1] - 176:16 imply [1] - 346:22 importance [1] - 44:13 important [17] - 20:12, 33:19, 44:12, 118:5, 119:8, 119:13, 158:12, 257:24, 283:18, 316:25, 329:16, 349:14, 360:10, 366:11, 366:15, 366:19, 378:24 importantly [2] - 221:17, 257:18 impose [2] - 310:24, 323:20 impossible [2] - 236:8, 236:9 improve [1] - 162:20 improvement [1] - 156:24 improvements [3] - 162:13, 197:17, 241:22 improving [2] - 21:8, 158:11</p>			

<p>inherently [1] - 323:4 initial [3] - 94:25, 97:20, 168:12 initiative [1] - 260:14 input [3] - 20:4, 22:13, 22:21 inputs [2] - 179:18, 184:1 inside [1] - 295:1 insights [2] - 231:11, 231:23 instability [1] - 373:15 install [3] - 315:25, 317:4, 381:18 installation [1] - 114:18 instance [5] - 162:4, 162:8, 276:23, 277:7, 289:12 instances [2] - 189:23, 277:6 instead [8] - 19:20, 33:11, 59:19, 88:17, 104:9, 211:25, 273:6, 359:22 Institute [1] - 195:20 instruct [1] - 265:6 instructed [5] - 155:8, 172:18, 208:20, 265:23, 306:22 insulated [1] - 258:9 insurance [10] - 61:23, 61:25, 62:3, 62:4, 62:5, 62:14, 62:16, 142:17, 142:18, 225:17 integrated [9] - 42:11, 47:7, 47:16, 73:13, 95:4, 98:12, 180:11, 201:5, 308:14 integration [2] - 58:5, 363:19 IntelliSwitches [2] - 167:14, 167:15 IntelliTeam [4] - 13:8, 114:17, 167:22, 169:16 intend [1] - 279:21 intended [1] - 99:11 intending [2] - 17:24, 332:9 intense [1] - 348:5 intensive [2] - 48:11, 80:18 intentions [1] - 77:13 interacted [1] - 195:20 interchange [1] - 376:8 interconnections [1] - 116:16 interest [17] - 16:2, 34:5, 44:4, 89:6, 96:22, 117:7, 117:14, 122:25, 182:4, 183:6, 183:22, 186:13, 284:18, 284:20, 285:1, 285:11, 356:9 interested [2] - 118:9, 347:16 interesting [2] - 125:18, 197:10 interestingly [1] - 72:1 interests [12] - 33:23, 37:1, 40:25, 42:3, 42:23, 44:19, 55:5, 77:24, 135:20,</p>	<p>148:12, 157:23, 213:6 interim [4] - 13:17, 15:20, 15:22, 15:25 Interim [2] - 9:5, 9:6 interject [1] - 93:17 intermediate [1] - 337:8 internally [1] - 81:22 internship [1] - 185:14 interpret [1] - 342:22 intervene [3] - 18:4, 198:19, 205:4 intervenors [4] - 18:5, 31:6, 321:8, 321:20 introduced [1] - 335:12 introductory [1] - 177:23 invaluable [1] - 100:4 invest [8] - 48:24, 50:25, 84:22, 101:17, 102:25, 184:16, 239:8, 261:13 invested [1] - 102:20 investigation [1] - 158:1 investing [4] - 18:23, 68:25, 101:11, 191:6 investment [32] - 45:22, 45:25, 48:5, 48:7, 48:17, 57:23, 60:8, 60:13, 68:24, 86:6, 89:19, 94:19, 102:11, 102:13, 102:18, 102:23, 103:3, 103:22, 104:2, 105:1, 108:9, 125:24, 126:1, 126:23, 127:3, 136:22, 174:15, 191:4, 191:7, 192:6, 221:12, 268:1 investments [60] - 29:5, 30:1, 40:18, 40:20, 40:23, 40:24, 41:5, 41:11, 41:18, 44:11, 46:4, 46:6, 46:7, 46:10, 46:17, 46:23, 47:3, 47:4, 47:9, 48:12, 48:15, 49:1, 49:15, 49:25, 52:10, 54:11, 56:18, 58:5, 80:24, 81:2, 81:3, 101:3, 101:12, 103:13, 105:22, 105:24, 106:1, 106:4, 106:6, 106:10, 108:6, 108:11, 108:19, 108:20, 109:2, 109:9, 109:20, 109:21, 112:10, 112:14, 113:9, 114:16, 158:22, 174:18, 175:7, 175:10, 258:14, 351:11, 365:17, 365:19 Investor [1] - 153:8 investor [11] - 18:22, 120:21, 123:21, 251:18, 252:11, 254:24, 255:16, 255:20, 291:9, 291:17, 295:3 investor-owned [7] - 120:21, 123:21, 252:11, 254:24, 255:16, 255:20, 295:3</p>	<p>investors [4] - 49:1, 51:24, 52:15, 125:10 involved [8] - 21:4, 148:3, 153:14, 161:19, 219:8, 219:14, 304:23, 318:21 involvement [1] - 120:16 involving [1] - 256:16 iPad [2] - 19:19, 325:18 IRP [6] - 94:23, 94:25, 95:4, 95:14, 98:2, 99:4 IRPs [1] - 97:6 irrelevant [1] - 286:12 Island [18] - 40:21, 54:3, 54:7, 54:10, 54:12, 55:1, 55:6, 63:2, 94:19, 95:12, 96:9, 96:14, 174:15, 177:15, 177:18, 191:24, 202:4, 204:14 isolating [1] - 167:23 issue [22] - 36:17, 60:16, 62:14, 63:8, 69:11, 73:25, 77:18, 78:6, 133:6, 176:11, 196:9, 199:19, 199:21, 217:21, 261:9, 294:21, 294:25, 308:13, 352:17, 382:25, 383:2, 383:4 issued [1] - 201:8 issues [21] - 20:19, 23:14, 30:2, 36:10, 36:12, 42:20, 44:23, 58:16, 58:17, 74:3, 75:5, 100:21, 103:2, 105:5, 113:6, 146:11, 167:7, 199:17, 206:25, 256:15 Issues [1] - 14:3 item [3] - 202:17, 276:8, 294:11 items [10] - 89:7, 89:19, 142:8, 159:22, 189:19, 190:23, 215:21, 218:2, 269:2, 373:17 itself [7] - 62:10, 127:25, 184:3, 195:9, 205:18, 233:12, 239:1</p>	<p>94:16, 99:23, 100:8, 150:5, 154:21, 161:10, 163:5, 169:5, 171:14, 172:4, 188:2, 188:23, 208:1, 231:17, 232:8, 232:20, 233:7, 233:9, 236:3, 236:7, 243:1, 261:7, 261:21, 264:7, 288:9, 294:10, 305:13, 337:15, 337:18, 338:15, 339:3, 340:5, 340:12, 342:19, 343:15, 344:2, 344:6, 344:9, 348:9, 378:9, 378:11, 380:1, 383:18 Jeffcoat [48] - 3:6, 3:12, 3:14, 3:17, 4:4, 4:7, 4:16, 4:19, 5:4, 5:8, 5:16, 5:20, 5:24, 6:4, 6:8, 6:14, 6:22, 7:4, 7:7, 7:11, 7:14, 7:17, 7:20, 8:4, 8:9, 17:15, 24:22, 86:16, 87:5, 87:24, 94:15, 100:11, 140:5, 150:3, 154:20, 161:8, 171:12, 187:24, 207:25, 231:15, 232:6, 257:7, 261:5, 288:8, 305:11, 337:14, 342:3, 378:8 JEFFCOAT-SACCO [60] - 2:21, 17:14, 86:17, 87:6, 87:10, 88:2, 91:15, 91:20, 91:23, 92:8, 92:10, 92:19, 93:2, 93:6, 94:2, 94:6, 94:10, 94:16, 99:23, 100:8, 150:5, 154:21, 161:10, 163:5, 169:5, 171:14, 172:4, 188:2, 188:23, 208:1, 231:17, 232:8, 232:20, 233:7, 233:9, 236:3, 236:7, 243:1, 261:7, 261:21, 264:7, 288:9, 294:10, 305:13, 337:15, 337:18, 338:15, 339:3, 340:5, 340:12, 342:19, 343:15, 344:2, 344:6, 344:9, 348:9, 378:9, 378:11, 380:1, 383:18 Jeffcoat-Sacco [48] - 3:6, 3:12, 3:14, 3:17, 4:4, 4:7, 4:16, 4:19, 5:4, 5:8, 5:16, 5:20, 5:24, 6:4, 6:8, 6:14, 6:22, 7:4, 7:7, 7:11, 7:14, 7:17, 7:20, 8:4, 8:9, 17:15, 24:22, 86:16, 87:5, 87:24, 94:15, 100:11, 140:5, 150:3, 154:20, 161:8, 171:12, 187:24, 207:25, 231:15, 232:6, 257:7, 261:5, 288:8, 305:11, 337:14, 342:3, 378:8 Jerry [3] - 17:16, 93:23, 94:7</p>
J			
<p>January [5] - 15:14, 15:19, 16:3, 381:13, 381:17 Japan [4] - 187:1, 187:5, 205:2, 206:2 Japanese [3] - 187:16, 205:23, 206:24 Jay [1] - 152:6 jeez [1] - 148:15 JEFFCOAT [60] - 2:21, 17:14, 86:17, 87:6, 87:10, 88:2, 91:15, 91:20, 91:23, 92:8, 92:10, 92:19, 93:2, 93:6, 94:2, 94:6, 94:10,</p>			

<p>job ^[17] - 18:17, 20:9, 21:2, 23:2, 23:6, 157:21, 183:9, 190:4, 194:20, 194:24, 195:8, 195:9, 211:4, 218:5, 244:25, 251:24, 347:24</p> <p>jobs ^[4] - 182:7, 210:25, 212:7, 247:6</p> <p>JOHNSON ^[30] - 2:10, 16:17, 264:20, 264:23, 265:8, 266:19, 266:24, 271:13, 282:14, 282:16, 304:2, 304:5, 305:6, 306:17, 307:9, 307:14, 312:16, 331:15, 331:19, 331:22, 332:8, 332:19, 338:20, 339:25, 341:12, 342:1, 373:7, 373:11, 377:10, 383:15</p> <p>Johnson ^[36] - 4:10, 4:12, 4:14, 4:18, 5:3, 5:6, 5:10, 5:19, 5:22, 6:16, 6:22, 7:5, 7:9, 7:12, 7:16, 7:19, 16:17, 264:18, 265:6, 266:18, 271:15, 282:12, 304:1, 305:8, 306:15, 307:6, 312:18, 331:18, 332:2, 332:6, 332:18, 338:19, 339:24, 341:23, 373:5, 380:23</p> <p>joint ^[1] - 350:1</p> <p>journeyman ^[1] - 195:25</p> <p>JP ^[1] - 13:12</p> <p>JR ^[2] - 6:20, 7:2</p> <p>Jr ^[3] - 11:19, 11:20, 12:17</p> <p>Judge ^[17] - 3:20, 7:3, 16:13, 18:14, 26:7, 27:25, 40:7, 47:24, 118:20, 139:21, 141:15, 145:17, 256:23, 271:17, 330:7, 330:15, 373:4</p> <p>JUDGE ^[247] - 1:23, 15:4, 16:15, 16:20, 16:25, 17:12, 17:18, 19:13, 22:9, 23:12, 26:3, 26:12, 27:20, 27:23, 28:1, 36:7, 37:3, 37:6, 37:9, 37:12, 38:1, 38:6, 38:14, 38:18, 45:1, 45:5, 45:9, 47:18, 48:1, 64:25, 65:4, 65:8, 65:19, 65:21, 67:13, 67:18, 67:22, 71:6, 71:11, 71:14, 83:18, 83:24, 84:3, 86:15, 87:4, 87:8, 87:15, 87:21, 91:17, 91:22, 92:6, 92:9, 92:17, 92:20, 93:5, 93:9, 93:13, 93:18, 94:14, 100:10, 118:21, 129:9, 133:14, 134:7, 134:12, 134:15, 139:19, 139:24, 141:4, 144:17, 144:21, 144:25, 145:6,</p>	<p>145:9, 145:15, 145:19, 150:2, 150:7, 150:10, 150:16, 152:2, 154:10, 154:14, 154:17, 154:19, 154:22, 155:1, 155:6, 155:10, 155:16, 155:20, 156:3, 159:8, 159:18, 161:7, 163:6, 166:17, 169:19, 169:22, 169:24, 170:5, 171:2, 171:6, 171:9, 171:12, 172:6, 172:12, 172:16, 172:21, 173:2, 173:6, 173:10, 176:25, 177:3, 181:11, 184:13, 187:23, 188:25, 197:4, 201:23, 203:4, 203:8, 204:5, 204:8, 204:10, 207:19, 207:22, 207:25, 208:2, 208:5, 208:8, 208:12, 208:18, 208:23, 209:4, 209:11, 213:13, 226:14, 226:18, 227:1, 228:6, 228:25, 229:12, 230:9, 230:24, 231:14, 232:6, 232:18, 233:1, 233:8, 243:3, 249:20, 256:9, 256:24, 257:2, 261:4, 261:23, 264:1, 264:4, 264:8, 264:15, 264:22, 264:25, 265:5, 265:18, 266:2, 266:15, 266:18, 271:12, 271:15, 272:19, 281:24, 282:4, 282:7, 282:10, 282:15, 282:17, 282:20, 288:7, 288:11, 289:25, 290:3, 291:23, 296:14, 303:25, 304:3, 305:8, 305:11, 305:14, 305:17, 306:5, 306:7, 306:11, 306:20, 306:24, 307:3, 312:18, 324:20, 330:5, 330:8, 330:12, 331:6, 331:18, 332:6, 332:9, 332:12, 332:17, 332:23, 333:11, 337:13, 338:19, 338:25, 339:24, 340:10, 340:16, 341:4, 341:18, 341:20, 342:2, 342:8, 344:4, 348:11, 350:18, 350:21, 360:13, 366:4, 370:7, 370:10, 370:13, 370:16, 370:20, 370:22, 373:5, 373:9, 377:12, 378:7, 380:3, 380:8, 382:2, 382:5, 383:7, 383:13, 383:16, 383:19, 383:21, 384:5, 384:9</p> <p>judge ^[3] - 16:5, 16:8, 330:3</p> <p>Judge's ^[1] - 159:15</p> <p>judges ^[2] - 370:20, 370:22</p>	<p>judgment ^[6] - 97:4, 97:7, 98:8, 127:19, 366:20, 367:9</p> <p>judgments ^[1] - 99:1</p> <p>JULIE ^[1] - 18:9</p> <p>JULIE ^[1] - 2:3</p> <p>July ^[7] - 317:6, 327:8, 327:21, 328:2, 328:3, 328:5, 333:25</p> <p>June ^[1] - 66:1</p> <p>jurisdiction ^[32] - 30:9, 31:3, 34:7, 52:7, 52:15, 53:1, 76:16, 122:17, 127:21, 144:4, 144:13, 150:22, 170:13, 203:17, 203:19, 272:13, 277:17, 295:12, 296:2, 308:24, 319:8, 320:1, 325:2, 356:1, 356:2, 357:18, 358:7, 358:8, 367:22, 368:20, 369:21, 374:4</p> <p>jurisdictional ^[21] - 13:4, 30:7, 30:12, 30:15, 31:16, 42:11, 86:22, 87:12, 272:5, 296:5, 296:11, 308:4, 308:12, 313:17, 339:7, 343:5, 343:7, 343:10, 344:16, 363:8, 379:6</p> <p>jurisdictionalize ^[1] - 273:22</p> <p>jurisdictions ^[48] - 29:18, 30:10, 30:16, 30:17, 30:19, 31:15, 71:17, 71:19, 73:13, 122:8, 295:9, 295:15, 296:10, 308:25, 311:12, 312:11, 313:4, 313:11, 318:7, 318:16, 318:17, 320:11, 323:19, 325:7, 325:8, 342:17, 355:25, 356:20, 357:1, 357:2, 357:12, 361:2, 366:10, 366:12, 366:23, 367:2, 367:13, 368:3, 369:2, 369:17, 369:24, 371:11, 371:22, 372:7, 377:20, 377:22, 377:25, 380:15</p>	<p>296:15, 340:16, 341:5, 360:14, 366:5, 371:7, 382:2</p> <p>KALK ^[53] - 2:3, 19:15, 65:6, 93:16, 93:19, 94:5, 94:9, 94:13, 118:23, 119:2, 129:7, 150:12, 150:18, 152:3, 154:9, 166:19, 166:21, 168:21, 169:10, 169:14, 170:7, 170:8, 170:25, 197:6, 197:8, 201:21, 203:5, 203:10, 204:2, 229:15, 249:22, 249:24, 252:23, 253:4, 253:6, 256:6, 291:25, 292:2, 294:19, 294:20, 296:13, 306:6, 340:14, 340:17, 360:15, 360:17, 366:2, 380:5, 382:3, 382:7, 383:3, 384:3, 384:7</p> <p>Kalk's ^[1] - 369:18</p> <p>Kari ^[5] - 16:11, 16:13, 28:10, 28:16, 141:8</p> <p>KARI ^[1] - 2:6</p> <p>Karl ^[4] - 11:25, 12:3, 12:21, 308:8</p> <p>keep ^[26] - 28:7, 29:5, 49:19, 59:16, 96:17, 97:22, 102:14, 105:12, 109:5, 109:20, 136:21, 174:19, 176:21, 182:22, 182:23, 186:20, 186:23, 200:7, 206:21, 206:22, 217:19, 277:4, 277:13, 284:17, 356:23, 358:11</p> <p>keeping ^[2] - 116:25, 118:4</p> <p>keeps ^[1] - 297:16</p> <p>kept ^[1] - 280:20</p> <p>Kewaunee ^[1] - 194:12</p> <p>key ^[11] - 41:3, 176:8, 212:20, 221:8, 221:19, 234:2, 234:6, 234:8, 241:12, 248:6, 295:22</p> <p>kick ^[1] - 119:10</p> <p>kicks ^[1] - 149:17</p> <p>kidding ^[1] - 297:17</p> <p>kilowatt ^[3] - 15:17, 333:22, 333:24</p> <p>kilowatt-hours ^[1] - 15:17</p> <p>kind ^[63] - 18:24, 19:6, 50:7, 53:9, 64:1, 64:2, 89:18, 100:19, 105:6, 108:12, 108:16, 111:3, 112:8, 113:16, 115:7, 130:20, 131:13, 131:17, 132:5, 137:22, 149:19, 151:9, 163:15, 165:17, 167:5, 168:22, 181:16, 184:22, 192:2, 192:7, 204:20, 205:2, 205:20, 215:3,</p>
K			
		<p>K-Mart ^[1] - 279:16</p> <p>Kalk ^[48] - 3:7, 3:9, 3:13, 3:18, 3:20, 4:5, 4:11, 4:17, 4:21, 5:5, 5:14, 5:17, 5:21, 6:8, 6:11, 6:17, 6:23, 7:10, 7:18, 8:5, 8:10, 18:8, 19:14, 22:10, 28:15, 93:18, 118:22, 129:10, 129:18, 139:14, 150:10, 166:18, 171:3, 197:5, 203:8, 229:14, 230:14, 249:21, 253:1, 256:10, 291:24,</p>	

<p>215:5, 215:7, 215:21, 218:4, 220:6, 220:20, 222:22, 230:15, 230:18, 231:6, 242:17, 243:13, 254:8, 263:7, 278:12, 285:11, 291:11, 333:18, 351:23, 352:7, 360:23, 372:13, 372:22, 373:16, 375:9, 379:12, 379:19 kinds [3] - 200:13, 202:10, 351:14 king [1] - 34:11 KING [1] - 7:8 King [2] - 11:22, 12:18 king's [1] - 34:9 knowing [3] - 186:17, 380:23 knowledge [2] - 182:13, 206:5 known [3] - 98:13, 103:20, 104:2 knows [1] - 296:11 KOENIG [2] - 4:2, 209:14 Koenig [21] - 9:20, 9:22, 10:23, 35:23, 149:24, 208:6, 208:15, 208:17, 208:18, 208:19, 209:19, 210:1, 213:11, 213:18, 226:24, 228:17, 233:3, 256:14, 257:6, 264:9 KPI [1] - 234:1 KPIs [3] - 221:19, 233:24, 241:13 Kramer [1] - 153:19 kV [2] - 58:12, 168:1</p>	<p>largest [2] - 60:20, 157:15 Larry [1] - 343:4 last [29] - 21:6, 81:7, 99:13, 99:19, 102:22, 106:18, 108:16, 114:4, 120:20, 127:22, 131:4, 131:21, 134:18, 136:14, 158:16, 183:22, 195:15, 196:19, 213:25, 254:20, 286:19, 295:7, 328:24, 337:19, 354:1, 356:16, 379:13, 379:15, 382:14 late [23] - 87:5, 87:16, 87:22, 89:16, 91:17, 92:18, 92:24, 93:4, 93:10, 93:13, 133:5, 134:10, 134:16, 158:21, 168:22, 169:8, 169:15, 169:25, 170:1, 170:5, 206:7, 226:13, 230:20 LATE [1] - 13:3 late-filed [21] - 87:5, 87:16, 87:22, 89:16, 91:17, 92:18, 92:24, 93:4, 93:10, 93:13, 133:15, 134:10, 134:16, 168:22, 169:8, 169:15, 169:25, 170:1, 170:5, 226:13, 230:20 LATE-FILED [1] - 13:3 latest [1] - 65:11 latter [2] - 202:15, 321:16 Laughter [1] - 297:14 LAURA [2] - 3:4, 38:21 Laura [17] - 9:11, 9:12, 10:19, 16:23, 37:25, 40:7, 84:5, 119:3, 126:7, 129:8, 141:8, 150:19, 151:22, 152:4, 165:21, 166:23, 251:23 Laura's [1] - 192:25 LAW [1] - 1:23 Law [3] - 2:11, 2:16, 2:21 law [7] - 16:5, 16:8, 37:14, 200:1, 266:4, 342:12, 342:25 laws [1] - 201:11 lawyers [1] - 112:21 layers [1] - 82:3 lays [5] - 232:4, 329:4, 344:17, 344:18, 344:24 lead [7] - 286:10, 298:7, 321:25, 325:9, 352:14, 352:15, 368:10 leader [4] - 216:4, 218:11, 237:23, 260:9 leaders [9] - 77:8, 218:7, 234:4, 238:9, 241:19, 248:21, 249:7, 260:20, 260:24 leadership [2] - 221:21, 262:15</p>	<p>leading [2] - 164:4, 202:11 leads [3] - 263:3, 360:8, 367:11 lean [1] - 116:4 leaner [1] - 121:3 learn [1] - 217:20 learned [5] - 116:9, 136:15, 175:22, 189:22, 190:12 lease [3] - 59:7, 59:20, 60:1 leased [1] - 289:13 leasing [3] - 59:12, 59:14, 59:18 least [10] - 25:14, 27:5, 63:5, 112:6, 131:8, 189:21, 309:21, 341:7, 343:22, 371:11 leave [6] - 187:6, 277:7, 277:11, 305:22, 320:13, 359:8 leaves [2] - 105:4, 359:24 leaving [2] - 140:20, 212:22 lecture [1] - 124:24 led [2] - 135:19, 205:5 left [5] - 129:16, 129:19, 185:22, 205:24, 206:2 leftover [1] - 300:3 legal [36] - 12:10, 17:13, 32:22, 81:19, 82:8, 269:2, 269:5, 269:10, 269:13, 269:17, 269:19, 279:2, 279:3, 279:10, 279:16, 279:25, 280:1, 280:5, 280:12, 280:13, 281:2, 281:16, 283:1, 283:6, 283:9, 285:23, 288:18, 289:6, 289:7, 289:9, 289:20, 290:9, 291:1, 298:6, 300:10 legally [3] - 289:23, 289:24, 301:1 legislation [1] - 14:4 legislative [2] - 9:6, 9:8 legitimate [2] - 126:16, 316:24 legitimately [1] - 51:7 Lein [1] - 17:17 length [1] - 26:18 lengthen [1] - 274:6 lengthened [1] - 274:3 lens [3] - 18:22, 19:1, 19:6 lenses [1] - 18:21 less [37] - 54:25, 55:3, 69:17, 76:11, 88:23, 94:22, 106:13, 107:21, 115:9, 131:1, 135:12, 135:16, 136:4, 137:2, 137:17, 138:6, 138:14, 138:15, 138:17, 138:19, 189:6, 189:10, 189:14, 194:7, 206:5, 311:14, 314:17,</p>	<p>327:4, 349:13, 353:2, 358:20, 360:1, 380:20, 380:21, 381:16 lessens [1] - 138:13 lessons [4] - 116:9, 175:22, 189:22, 190:12 Letter [1] - 9:4 level [50] - 36:4, 48:13, 52:14, 52:17, 64:18, 79:8, 82:12, 88:8, 102:23, 106:21, 110:19, 116:8, 117:14, 120:16, 131:6, 180:6, 182:5, 184:6, 184:19, 185:2, 190:7, 194:9, 205:2, 212:4, 212:8, 215:17, 216:23, 216:24, 216:25, 217:1, 244:24, 244:25, 245:6, 245:17, 246:19, 247:1, 247:3, 262:10, 262:12, 262:15, 262:25, 268:24, 273:24, 284:24, 296:5, 315:7, 317:5, 326:8, 347:8 levels [14] - 36:2, 179:2, 223:25, 239:23, 240:2, 241:3, 244:18, 245:10, 245:15, 246:5, 246:6, 248:2, 311:24, 373:14 leveraging [1] - 114:6 liabilities [3] - 286:25, 287:7, 299:14 liability [25] - 270:6, 270:13, 281:8, 281:17, 284:13, 284:15, 285:19, 285:24, 291:15, 298:2, 298:14, 298:16, 298:20, 298:24, 299:13, 299:19, 299:22, 299:25, 300:9, 302:3, 302:13, 302:16, 303:15, 303:16, 303:21 license [17] - 81:4, 175:4, 175:13, 176:4, 176:6, 177:8, 177:14, 178:10, 178:23, 179:17, 179:19, 179:24, 180:4, 198:5, 203:15 licensed [2] - 200:17, 205:18 licensee [1] - 180:11 licenses [2] - 177:10, 177:12 licensing [5] - 175:6, 198:10, 199:23, 200:5, 354:17 lie [5] - 330:21, 330:22, 333:4, 333:5, 334:10 lieu [2] - 184:18, 186:12 life [17] - 33:21, 34:4, 40:20, 46:8, 46:9, 81:2, 176:5, 177:15, 177:17, 177:19, 178:10, 274:6, 274:13, 274:15, 275:17, 293:7, 302:22</p>
L			
<p>label [1] - 92:20 labeled [3] - 70:5, 87:18, 87:20 labels [1] - 346:12 labor [5] - 51:11, 113:18, 176:16, 191:13, 230:5 lack [9] - 54:7, 128:1, 170:13, 182:4, 183:6, 184:7, 186:13, 278:12, 365:6 laid [3] - 328:13, 344:19, 345:4 lain [1] - 317:18 land [2] - 289:13, 289:16 landfill [2] - 276:21, 289:3 landfill-type [1] - 289:3 language [1] - 341:10 large [9] - 30:12, 61:4, 165:7, 253:14, 343:9, 353:12, 353:14, 356:11, 365:5 largely [1] - 368:21 larger [5] - 115:8, 122:13, 198:11, 207:13, 364:3</p>			

<p>lifecycles [1] - 198:18 lifetime [1] - 33:3 lifted [1] - 339:13 light [2] - 160:2, 229:5 lights [1] - 349:10 like-minded [1] - 218:20 likely [8] - 160:24, 198:15, 226:24, 351:6, 351:25, 352:25, 355:25, 365:9 likewise [1] - 374:4 limit [1] - 269:1 limited [2] - 212:23, 315:19 limiting [3] - 198:1, 200:8, 200:9 limits [2] - 136:16, 140:23 Linda [1] - 141:11 Line [1] - 12:12 line [48] - 39:16, 39:19, 39:21, 39:22, 39:23, 39:24, 51:11, 53:24, 63:20, 66:7, 66:10, 66:14, 71:21, 78:3, 78:11, 81:14, 118:22, 119:20, 124:6, 134:18, 148:8, 181:8, 201:12, 220:20, 222:3, 224:25, 245:22, 268:21, 272:7, 274:7, 276:8, 277:9, 277:10, 280:24, 299:8, 304:20, 304:23, 320:22, 325:24, 373:17, 373:24, 374:8, 375:8, 375:11 lined [1] - 20:16 lines [25] - 32:20, 39:19, 66:5, 66:20, 66:22, 69:18, 147:2, 160:1, 183:4, 252:8, 269:14, 269:15, 269:20, 269:21, 278:3, 297:18, 297:23, 320:20, 328:12, 338:4, 345:25, 369:18, 374:24, 375:7 linkage [1] - 233:19 linked [2] - 233:14, 233:16 Lisa [7] - 9:23, 9:24, 10:24, 32:7, 140:15, 264:23, 292:3 LISA [2] - 4:9, 266:20 list [16] - 14:3, 17:19, 24:19, 25:20, 82:1, 89:19, 89:24, 89:25, 92:13, 94:4, 94:11, 147:25, 160:18, 209:6, 236:4, 269:11 List [3] - 11:16, 12:25, 13:19 listed [7] - 275:25, 288:19, 292:16, 297:1, 306:15, 338:3, 384:11 listen [4] - 126:24, 265:17, 361:3, 361:11 listening [1] - 18:21 Listing [1] - 13:7 lists [4] - 32:1, 268:7, 269:9,</p>	<p>314:15 live [1] - 77:7 lived [1] - 370:16 lives [11] - 32:24, 143:15, 174:18, 174:23, 176:9, 183:20, 268:2, 268:17, 268:20, 274:3, 276:10 living [5] - 113:13, 128:5, 224:17, 224:23, 360:18 LM-1 [1] - 99:25 load [43] - 31:23, 54:8, 56:17, 105:8, 106:3, 108:6, 174:20, 191:10, 192:1, 309:18, 315:22, 316:13, 316:15, 316:18, 316:19, 316:23, 317:5, 317:7, 317:18, 317:20, 317:24, 323:13, 324:13, 334:14, 347:1, 347:4, 347:17, 347:18, 351:3, 351:4, 351:5, 351:7, 351:20, 354:22, 354:24, 365:7, 369:7, 374:7, 374:16, 377:1, 381:17, 381:22 loads [30] - 309:13, 309:14, 309:22, 310:1, 310:17, 311:3, 312:1, 318:4, 324:14, 324:23, 325:1, 335:14, 336:17, 346:5, 346:6, 346:19, 348:4, 349:13, 352:7, 352:9, 352:10, 355:1, 355:14, 365:14, 377:7, 378:23, 379:2, 379:22, 381:13 lobbied [1] - 125:7 lobby [1] - 133:6 lobbying [9] - 13:20, 132:13, 132:16, 132:23, 133:4, 146:11, 146:12, 147:20, 153:6 local [6] - 58:16, 103:1, 186:4, 275:22, 277:21, 304:8 localized [1] - 349:8 located [2] - 90:17, 377:19 location [2] - 59:18, 66:16 locked [1] - 305:23 log [1] - 325:17 LOLP [3] - 347:5, 347:6, 381:21 long-range [2] - 98:19, 98:24 long-term [14] - 120:25, 121:1, 176:7, 186:2, 186:12, 186:15, 200:13, 200:20, 210:14, 220:22, 220:24, 239:11, 241:4, 243:19 longstanding [5] - 31:5, 31:19, 41:25, 44:15, 267:20</p>	<p>look [148] - 18:19, 19:10, 21:14, 21:20, 28:22, 41:22, 44:20, 50:21, 51:7, 53:17, 53:18, 53:23, 60:16, 65:25, 66:7, 66:14, 68:2, 68:6, 74:7, 75:14, 95:6, 96:20, 96:25, 103:12, 113:21, 114:1, 114:8, 114:9, 118:16, 123:19, 124:1, 124:14, 124:15, 132:6, 134:1, 137:12, 139:1, 142:8, 151:25, 152:4, 152:5, 160:5, 160:10, 161:1, 162:5, 164:5, 164:9, 164:15, 164:22, 165:13, 167:16, 168:6, 168:8, 168:11, 183:3, 183:15, 184:16, 190:18, 191:10, 191:18, 199:4, 199:5, 199:6, 205:14, 209:6, 214:23, 215:1, 215:16, 215:17, 217:17, 217:18, 223:11, 223:25, 224:5, 225:8, 236:13, 236:18, 237:25, 238:3, 238:5, 238:11, 238:17, 239:12, 239:13, 239:17, 242:9, 242:12, 242:24, 245:11, 247:4, 247:25, 248:1, 248:3, 249:2, 255:8, 255:22, 256:1, 256:2, 263:17, 277:23, 277:25, 278:15, 278:23, 280:6, 288:20, 288:21, 290:8, 293:3, 293:22, 294:6, 294:8, 294:13, 298:24, 317:13, 317:16, 324:1, 329:12, 331:14, 334:2, 341:9, 342:15, 344:22, 345:1, 345:6, 345:8, 345:9, 348:4, 349:3, 349:5, 349:11, 350:11, 351:2, 352:23, 353:9, 353:16, 365:8, 365:14, 369:4, 373:17, 373:23, 378:21, 378:22, 379:1, 381:5, 381:7, 381:20, 381:21 looked [11] - 20:11, 21:13, 63:2, 99:21, 128:8, 128:9, 232:10, 233:11, 293:16, 322:7, 350:2 looking [89] - 18:14, 18:19, 18:20, 18:23, 19:1, 19:2, 22:7, 23:8, 46:19, 48:25, 52:7, 52:15, 52:25, 56:1, 57:2, 57:9, 58:23, 72:12, 75:10, 81:17, 82:12, 86:5, 92:15, 97:13, 101:20, 104:5, 111:3, 113:20, 115:16, 117:5, 123:18, 138:2, 139:3, 161:21,</p>	<p>161:23, 163:16, 168:15, 169:25, 181:22, 184:25, 192:8, 198:24, 218:9, 220:11, 228:24, 229:2, 230:4, 230:5, 230:6, 230:15, 232:2, 238:21, 239:5, 240:12, 240:21, 242:19, 244:4, 253:7, 254:18, 255:13, 255:15, 257:19, 257:20, 258:2, 282:10, 285:5, 288:17, 304:20, 318:3, 327:6, 327:15, 333:2, 333:23, 334:19, 336:16, 337:20, 344:7, 344:14, 348:24, 349:18, 349:19, 349:21, 351:3, 352:16, 354:22, 355:7, 374:24, 379:11, 383:1 looks [17] - 58:3, 64:9, 75:4, 75:5, 138:2, 151:4, 164:12, 199:12, 288:18, 291:8, 291:9, 324:13, 327:10, 327:11, 327:18, 339:7, 383:21 losing [1] - 315:22 loss [16] - 88:15, 143:21, 143:23, 185:19, 206:14, 258:10, 300:5, 317:20, 334:14, 347:4, 347:17, 347:18, 373:21, 373:23, 374:6, 374:16 losses [3] - 88:13, 129:19, 182:21 lost [2] - 201:14, 357:8 loudly [1] - 266:16 low [13] - 49:19, 95:3, 110:11, 110:12, 158:3, 175:2, 187:13, 191:18, 204:24, 207:9, 207:15, 277:5, 374:10 lower [18] - 35:17, 48:17, 48:18, 53:21, 56:17, 58:8, 70:6, 108:1, 125:9, 125:15, 127:2, 136:4, 222:24, 223:3, 223:4, 223:20, 246:5, 268:19 lowers [3] - 115:22, 115:23, 356:2 lowest [3] - 245:6, 278:17, 367:14 LTI [1] - 221:21 lunch [2] - 26:24, 92:15</p>
M			
<p>ma'am [3] - 150:12, 172:20, 194:22 machine [1] - 191:17 machines [1] - 116:21</p>			

<p>magic [2] - 378:15, 378:17</p> <p>magnitude [6] - 44:14, 46:15, 105:23, 364:7, 381:1, 381:2</p> <p>magnitudes [1] - 346:5</p> <p>main [3] - 29:3, 112:14, 167:17</p> <p>maintain [5] - 103:1, 105:11, 158:25, 287:17, 288:1</p> <p>maintaining [3] - 138:11, 158:11, 366:24</p> <p>maintenance [23] - 61:3, 70:21, 115:16, 115:22, 175:12, 191:14, 207:7, 301:9, 301:13, 315:21, 317:24, 331:1, 334:13, 335:2, 335:4, 335:6, 336:4, 336:12, 337:6, 353:12, 353:15, 355:12, 381:8</p> <p>major [12] - 46:5, 46:6, 46:11, 46:23, 48:8, 63:6, 96:18, 103:2, 157:2, 157:18, 158:6, 269:16</p> <p>majority [4] - 77:24, 148:6, 224:7, 246:4</p> <p>Majoros [12] - 11:19, 11:20, 12:17, 33:5, 33:9, 267:14, 267:16, 268:7, 270:2, 270:14, 270:21, 271:1</p> <p>MAJOROS [2] - 6:20, 7:2</p> <p>Majoros' [4] - 267:21, 268:6, 268:25, 270:2</p> <p>Majoros's [2] - 32:13, 33:24</p> <p>makeup [1] - 123:12</p> <p>Mall [3] - 2:7, 59:2, 59:6</p> <p>man [1] - 306:9</p> <p>manage [9] - 49:19, 49:21, 50:18, 80:19, 81:14, 157:4, 211:21, 211:23</p> <p>managed [3] - 120:18, 157:19, 237:6</p> <p>management [13] - 13:19, 82:4, 122:5, 139:14, 162:22, 175:1, 216:10, 218:7, 229:18, 237:21, 241:4, 248:20, 262:15</p> <p>manager [1] - 120:15</p> <p>managers [2] - 183:8, 185:16</p> <p>manages [1] - 134:2</p> <p>managing [9] - 50:3, 50:14, 50:22, 83:2, 115:17, 116:18, 120:24, 205:17, 211:10</p> <p>mandate [1] - 117:12</p> <p>mandates [5] - 124:8, 369:23, 371:4, 371:10, 371:12</p> <p>Manitoba [1] - 381:15</p> <p>manner [7] - 24:6, 36:3, 77:23, 85:2, 161:25,</p>	<p>210:17, 230:17</p> <p>Manual [29] - 32:1, 311:19, 313:22, 314:6, 314:7, 314:13, 314:14, 314:19, 326:4, 328:7, 328:21, 329:1, 329:4, 329:10, 329:19, 329:22, 330:18, 333:22, 334:4, 334:8, 334:16, 334:19, 344:11, 344:23, 345:4, 347:18, 347:19, 347:23, 378:25</p> <p>manual [5] - 328:18, 329:13, 329:24, 334:11, 347:17</p> <p>manufacturing [3] - 62:9, 62:12, 114:12</p> <p>map [1] - 344:24</p> <p>maps [1] - 328:15</p> <p>March [2] - 66:17, 213:21</p> <p>margin [2] - 336:1, 355:14</p> <p>marginal [1] - 345:16</p> <p>margins [6] - 331:2, 334:14, 335:9, 335:10, 335:15, 336:14</p> <p>mark [3] - 87:16, 134:7, 146:18</p> <p>Mark [1] - 134:1</p> <p>marked [12] - 39:3, 45:2, 68:3, 68:4, 69:9, 155:24, 156:11, 265:19, 267:1, 307:16, 326:16, 338:6</p> <p>market [41] - 34:15, 34:19, 36:1, 51:13, 51:16, 51:22, 79:10, 86:3, 86:4, 88:13, 88:15, 95:25, 111:1, 113:20, 113:21, 113:23, 129:2, 130:11, 130:15, 137:18, 137:19, 137:21, 137:24, 138:3, 143:21, 143:23, 183:2, 210:21, 212:8, 214:25, 223:24, 224:20, 225:8, 239:12, 242:11, 242:19, 255:3, 255:12, 256:1, 263:18</p> <p>market-based [4] - 224:20, 242:11, 255:12, 256:1</p> <p>market-competitive [1] - 51:16</p> <p>market-level [1] - 212:8</p> <p>marketplace [2] - 210:24, 214:1</p> <p>markets [4] - 48:25, 130:4, 130:7, 149:15</p> <p>Mart [1] - 279:16</p> <p>massive [6] - 61:6, 61:7, 61:11, 61:15, 157:19, 164:14</p> <p>match [1] - 34:23</p> <p>matched [1] - 35:7</p> <p>matches [1] - 34:21</p> <p>material [2] - 37:18, 266:5</p>	<p>materially [1] - 369:8</p> <p>materials [3] - 18:16, 62:12, 198:8</p> <p>math [5] - 283:14, 295:22, 327:11, 357:22, 359:21</p> <p>mathematical [2] - 180:9, 353:5</p> <p>mathematically [1] - 358:21</p> <p>matter [22] - 15:9, 16:6, 18:12, 23:14, 99:16, 142:19, 189:16, 219:7, 297:13, 315:8, 325:14, 328:9, 334:22, 349:10, 352:23, 357:22, 366:19, 367:24, 368:21, 380:25, 381:3, 381:4</p> <p>matters [1] - 321:21</p> <p>maximum [6] - 37:20, 147:7, 174:16, 266:7, 266:8, 374:18</p> <p>McCarten [31] - 3:4, 9:11, 9:13, 10:20, 16:23, 37:25, 38:3, 38:21, 39:3, 40:2, 40:8, 45:13, 47:19, 65:13, 67:24, 84:6, 84:8, 129:15, 139:13, 141:8, 141:9, 141:19, 143:9, 144:16, 144:19, 154:23, 159:20, 256:15, 314:3, 321:23</p> <p>McCarten's [3] - 38:16, 232:4, 232:10</p> <p>McLeod [1] - 152:25</p> <p>mcM [2] - 160:15, 160:17</p> <p>MDU [7] - 20:19, 150:25, 152:8, 152:12, 152:13, 251:12</p> <p>mean [44] - 57:6, 60:6, 98:4, 116:25, 119:7, 120:5, 123:8, 123:25, 124:13, 124:24, 127:15, 149:12, 163:18, 177:20, 188:21, 191:12, 198:18, 198:20, 218:24, 232:9, 232:17, 236:17, 237:5, 238:24, 242:3, 243:21, 247:2, 251:7, 252:19, 275:1, 277:19, 278:15, 287:5, 318:19, 323:4, 338:16, 346:2, 346:12, 357:25, 362:9, 363:11, 372:19, 375:7, 378:13</p> <p>meaning [3] - 191:22, 210:18, 220:2</p> <p>means [15] - 84:13, 111:17, 138:25, 149:7, 232:25, 234:1, 247:3, 263:1, 275:2, 275:4, 364:10, 374:11, 375:17, 378:24, 381:15</p> <p>meant [7] - 223:8, 232:14, 262:14, 342:22, 343:11,</p>	<p>364:20, 372:20</p> <p>measure [4] - 162:5, 210:25, 238:14, 374:22</p> <p>measures [3] - 161:22, 189:7, 207:18</p> <p>mechanical [1] - 158:3</p> <p>mechanics [2] - 185:16, 371:18</p> <p>mechanism [3] - 41:16, 89:10, 168:14</p> <p>mechanisms [2] - 41:23, 221:14</p> <p>median [8] - 214:23, 222:19, 222:24, 224:4, 225:9, 225:22, 242:16, 263:18</p> <p>medium [1] - 372:7</p> <p>meet [35] - 42:24, 47:12, 55:23, 55:24, 82:8, 95:7, 97:2, 105:8, 105:20, 106:3, 106:12, 108:6, 111:5, 123:11, 160:1, 183:24, 201:20, 258:23, 310:6, 312:3, 315:2, 315:4, 316:14, 316:15, 316:18, 316:19, 316:22, 317:5, 324:7, 349:12, 349:13, 351:20, 354:24, 365:19, 377:7</p> <p>meeting [9] - 21:20, 54:25, 112:2, 124:7, 124:12, 143:12, 160:13, 324:5, 337:22</p> <p>meets [5] - 30:14, 258:21, 309:1, 310:19, 312:8</p> <p>megawatt [5] - 69:14, 69:15, 69:25, 70:22, 354:15</p> <p>megawatt-hour [3] - 69:14, 69:15, 70:22</p> <p>megawatts [10] - 54:15, 56:12, 57:6, 106:24, 327:12, 327:19, 350:4, 350:5, 354:18, 355:7</p> <p>melded [1] - 280:12</p> <p>meltdown [1] - 204:21</p> <p>member [3] - 22:20, 146:18, 146:19</p> <p>members [7] - 17:23, 18:7, 24:23, 25:12, 147:25, 148:5, 368:8</p> <p>membership [1] - 146:2</p> <p>memory [1] - 339:8</p> <p>mental [1] - 130:21</p> <p>mentality [1] - 216:16</p> <p>mention [7] - 141:10, 243:20, 323:2, 328:19, 337:4, 353:8, 374:18</p> <p>mentioned [35] - 17:24, 38:9, 38:10, 50:2, 54:2, 56:1, 63:17, 85:15, 103:13, 112:13, 117:7, 136:18,</p>
---	---	--	---

<p>184:5, 186:25, 195:14, 215:6, 217:22, 218:2, 219:20, 223:1, 234:24, 241:13, 248:19, 257:7, 257:9, 257:14, 263:20, 274:17, 287:4, 313:13, 316:11, 325:5, 367:10, 372:10</p> <p>merit [14] - 214:18, 236:21, 238:7, 238:8, 239:19, 248:19, 248:25, 249:2, 249:3, 249:6, 259:23, 260:3, 260:18, 260:22</p> <p>mesh [1] - 220:23</p> <p>met [8] - 42:25, 149:9, 159:25, 215:6, 215:7, 235:5, 259:2, 259:19</p> <p>method [154] - 31:8, 31:11, 31:12, 31:13, 31:14, 32:3, 42:11, 49:18, 63:22, 63:25, 73:5, 73:9, 73:16, 73:21, 274:14, 280:8, 283:17, 283:19, 285:5, 285:10, 285:13, 293:7, 308:3, 308:7, 308:22, 309:1, 309:5, 309:8, 309:13, 309:15, 309:25, 310:3, 310:11, 310:17, 310:21, 310:25, 311:2, 311:5, 311:12, 311:15, 311:19, 312:5, 312:12, 312:14, 313:1, 313:3, 313:8, 313:10, 313:16, 313:20, 313:23, 314:7, 314:19, 314:20, 314:21, 314:22, 318:11, 318:24, 319:1, 319:21, 319:22, 320:8, 320:9, 320:16, 321:9, 321:19, 322:10, 322:13, 322:23, 323:3, 323:11, 323:17, 323:18, 323:22, 323:25, 324:11, 324:16, 325:5, 325:12, 325:20, 325:21, 326:1, 328:25, 329:11, 330:21, 330:25, 334:5, 334:9, 334:12, 334:17, 334:22, 343:6, 343:8, 346:1, 347:5, 347:11, 347:14, 347:15, 347:19, 352:6, 352:14, 353:24, 356:14, 356:18, 356:23, 357:6, 357:14, 357:16, 357:18, 357:23, 358:6, 358:10, 358:14, 358:20, 358:25, 359:4, 359:12, 359:15, 359:17, 359:24, 359:25, 360:3, 360:6, 360:7, 363:15, 364:16, 366:9, 367:6, 367:13, 367:20, 368:3, 368:7, 368:13, 368:16,</p>	<p>368:20, 368:21, 374:3, 374:5, 374:7, 374:13, 374:15, 374:16, 374:19, 378:2, 378:4, 379:1, 380:14, 380:16, 382:13</p> <p>methodologies [2] - 42:5, 316:4</p> <p>methodology [10] - 62:12, 227:10, 270:22, 313:18, 314:10, 318:6, 319:19, 323:4, 328:8</p> <p>methods [33] - 32:2, 200:20, 206:12, 206:19, 238:17, 312:10, 314:17, 317:22, 320:13, 325:16, 328:13, 329:17, 329:18, 329:21, 347:20, 347:22, 348:3, 348:7, 355:24, 357:21, 358:1, 359:1, 360:5, 366:23, 367:11, 371:23, 372:11, 372:18, 372:25, 374:1, 377:20, 377:21, 380:19</p> <p>metrics [17] - 67:7, 85:5, 161:12, 215:12, 215:14, 215:17, 215:18, 217:14, 233:22, 237:2, 238:2, 238:12, 245:20, 257:22, 258:22, 259:8, 374:17</p> <p>MICHAEL [3] - 6:2, 6:20, 7:2</p> <p>Michael [5] - 10:15, 11:8, 11:19, 11:20, 12:17</p> <p>Michigan [2] - 353:13, 376:10</p> <p>microphone [1] - 291:20</p> <p>microsystem [1] - 351:24</p> <p>mid [1] - 241:4</p> <p>middle [4] - 83:6, 217:8, 274:2, 330:13</p> <p>Midwest [1] - 110:25</p> <p>might [50] - 19:4, 19:8, 21:13, 71:21, 71:23, 97:23, 123:22, 127:5, 131:4, 151:4, 184:9, 205:6, 205:12, 218:25, 222:21, 223:5, 228:21, 229:20, 229:21, 229:22, 237:2, 242:5, 245:2, 245:3, 263:10, 276:22, 276:23, 278:5, 284:7, 294:3, 298:7, 306:1, 314:17, 315:22, 329:8, 333:9, 333:14, 333:15, 334:10, 339:21, 345:12, 351:6, 351:8, 352:3, 353:17, 353:19, 359:2, 366:18, 367:19, 375:15</p> <p>Mike [1] - 17:8</p> <p>miles [1] - 202:8</p> <p>military [1] - 184:2</p>	<p>million [18] - 30:21, 40:14, 142:9, 164:1, 165:13, 165:16, 192:10, 192:12, 268:14, 268:23, 272:2, 272:24, 285:19, 285:20, 308:10, 333:22, 333:24, 362:14</p> <p>mind [5] - 150:14, 157:20, 343:11, 355:19, 371:16</p> <p>minded [1] - 218:20</p> <p>mineral [1] - 276:24</p> <p>minimal [1] - 356:21</p> <p>minimize [6] - 309:11, 311:25, 315:11, 316:1, 319:19, 320:4</p> <p>minimizes [2] - 319:21, 320:8</p> <p>minimizing [3] - 113:8, 319:24, 320:17</p> <p>minimum [6] - 234:15, 235:5, 279:20, 283:9, 283:20, 374:20</p> <p>Minneapolis [8] - 2:8, 2:12, 59:2, 59:6, 116:12, 136:20, 214:1, 352:2</p> <p>Minnesota [61] - 2:8, 2:12, 14:4, 22:5, 30:24, 44:5, 44:7, 52:21, 57:4, 60:21, 68:8, 68:12, 68:15, 71:22, 73:15, 113:11, 114:8, 114:9, 115:5, 122:10, 122:11, 132:4, 132:8, 148:14, 152:18, 165:25, 166:9, 198:17, 203:11, 203:16, 203:19, 203:22, 273:13, 287:19, 287:20, 296:8, 297:23, 318:12, 318:19, 319:16, 325:1, 327:16, 335:19, 346:17, 350:4, 350:16, 356:19, 356:22, 358:7, 358:11, 358:18, 359:18, 361:7, 369:9, 369:13, 369:23, 370:2, 370:17, 376:3, 376:6</p> <p>Minot [5] - 13:9, 167:15, 168:1, 169:17, 351:13</p> <p>minus [2] - 274:22, 374:10</p> <p>minute [10] - 36:7, 110:9, 137:22, 137:23, 208:9, 230:4, 317:16, 330:4, 330:7, 341:16</p> <p>minutes [18] - 26:18, 28:11, 66:12, 66:18, 83:23, 83:25, 141:5, 202:6, 202:8, 264:11, 264:13, 265:10, 305:18, 330:9, 341:18, 341:21, 379:13, 380:9</p> <p>miraculous [1] - 290:16</p> <p>misleading [1] - 108:13</p>	<p>mismanagement [2] - 63:10, 126:19</p> <p>mismatch [1] - 35:9</p> <p>MISO [10] - 137:19, 171:20, 171:25, 310:10, 311:13, 316:3, 316:10, 363:8, 363:20, 364:11</p> <p>MISO's [1] - 316:5</p> <p>miss [2] - 17:18, 265:15</p> <p>missed [2] - 262:4, 265:25</p> <p>mission [2] - 153:10, 206:22</p> <p>misspoke [2] - 324:10, 347:21</p> <p>misstatement [2] - 37:18, 266:6</p> <p>mistaken [1] - 271:8</p> <p>mistakes [1] - 182:9</p> <p>mitigate [3] - 41:13, 41:21, 44:6</p> <p>mitigating [1] - 187:18</p> <p>mitigation [5] - 41:23, 109:25, 110:8, 143:23, 187:8</p> <p>mix [8] - 118:4, 186:1, 240:25, 242:14, 315:7, 333:9, 333:14</p> <p>mixed [1] - 366:22</p> <p>MN [2] - 165:1, 293:5</p> <p>model [2] - 295:3, 295:4</p> <p>modeling [1] - 239:6</p> <p>models [1] - 180:9</p> <p>modernization [2] - 165:4, 165:9</p> <p>modernize [2] - 68:25, 101:5</p> <p>modifications [2] - 99:1, 228:3</p> <p>modified [1] - 40:13</p> <p>modify [1] - 142:11</p> <p>moment [5] - 61:16, 90:1, 221:5, 226:22, 304:16</p> <p>money [22] - 45:23, 48:11, 59:23, 64:13, 77:15, 80:20, 82:14, 96:15, 102:15, 117:15, 118:11, 126:15, 130:6, 132:12, 132:16, 132:18, 149:18, 193:17, 222:6, 247:19, 292:22, 300:7</p> <p>monitor [1] - 96:17</p> <p>monitoring [4] - 95:19, 202:18, 224:4, 234:4</p> <p>month [19] - 15:17, 15:18, 185:9, 309:19, 313:1, 313:6, 313:7, 313:9, 313:15, 326:9, 335:3, 335:5, 335:10, 335:11, 336:11, 336:14, 336:15, 352:8</p> <p>monthly [16] - 13:17, 15:16, 310:11, 325:1, 326:5,</p>
---	--	---	---

<p>330:21, 330:22, 333:3, 333:4, 333:17, 334:10, 346:14, 346:15, 369:4, 369:6, 379:22</p> <p>Monthly [2] - 12:11, 13:15</p> <p>months [26] - 35:7, 35:8, 66:4, 157:16, 179:22, 250:5, 309:13, 309:14, 309:21, 310:2, 310:15, 310:16, 310:17, 310:18, 316:16, 316:20, 316:21, 334:15, 346:19, 347:1, 352:8, 365:15, 378:18, 378:20, 378:23</p> <p>Monticello [15] - 40:21, 40:22, 105:20, 174:16, 174:25, 175:12, 175:14, 177:13, 177:23, 177:24, 178:8, 187:4, 201:1, 202:5</p> <p>moreover [2] - 310:10, 355:11</p> <p>Morgan [1] - 13:12</p> <p>morning [11] - 16:12, 16:17, 17:3, 18:13, 40:6, 45:14, 45:15, 251:24, 340:13, 384:1, 384:10</p> <p>Moss [2] - 2:10, 16:18</p> <p>most [24] - 42:7, 42:10, 53:17, 55:24, 56:9, 61:5, 61:22, 106:20, 111:23, 111:24, 137:13, 195:19, 199:14, 276:2, 284:3, 288:18, 288:22, 289:17, 309:7, 325:20, 355:25, 365:9, 375:8, 382:11</p> <p>mostly [1] - 216:11</p> <p>mothball [1] - 303:6</p> <p>motivate [3] - 211:20, 215:11, 225:6</p> <p>motivated [1] - 217:13</p> <p>motivating [1] - 211:9</p> <p>Mountain [3] - 199:24, 200:5, 200:12</p> <p>move [9] - 19:4, 31:1, 31:8, 72:12, 94:23, 135:21, 135:22, 145:13, 298:15</p> <p>moved [2] - 121:12, 302:13</p> <p>moves [2] - 99:9, 273:22</p> <p>moving [6] - 58:25, 130:18, 189:24, 199:19, 285:11, 298:22</p> <p>MR [140] - 2:10, 2:15, 16:17, 17:3, 26:2, 27:19, 37:11, 45:4, 45:10, 45:12, 48:2, 48:3, 64:21, 65:2, 65:10, 65:12, 65:17, 65:23, 65:24, 67:11, 67:14, 67:24, 71:8, 71:12, 71:15, 83:22, 84:7, 84:8, 86:13, 93:11, 134:14, 144:20, 144:22, 145:1,</p>	<p>145:7, 145:11, 145:21, 145:23, 149:25, 154:18, 156:2, 159:10, 159:12, 159:15, 159:19, 161:5, 170:3, 171:11, 173:9, 177:4, 177:6, 181:13, 181:24, 184:15, 187:21, 207:24, 209:10, 213:15, 213:17, 226:7, 226:17, 229:6, 230:3, 230:23, 231:2, 231:3, 231:12, 257:3, 257:5, 261:2, 264:6, 264:20, 264:23, 265:8, 266:19, 266:24, 271:13, 271:17, 271:19, 272:20, 272:22, 281:22, 281:25, 282:6, 282:9, 282:14, 282:16, 282:19, 282:21, 288:5, 304:2, 304:5, 305:6, 305:10, 306:10, 306:17, 307:9, 307:14, 312:16, 312:20, 312:22, 321:4, 321:7, 324:18, 324:21, 326:15, 326:19, 326:25, 330:3, 330:6, 330:10, 330:15, 330:17, 331:4, 331:7, 331:12, 331:15, 331:19, 331:22, 331:25, 332:8, 332:11, 332:14, 332:19, 333:1, 333:2, 333:21, 337:11, 338:20, 339:25, 341:12, 342:1, 373:7, 373:11, 377:10, 377:14, 377:17, 378:5, 383:15, 383:17</p> <p>MS [108] - 2:6, 2:21, 16:12, 16:21, 17:14, 26:7, 27:22, 27:25, 28:14, 36:9, 37:5, 37:7, 37:24, 38:17, 38:20, 39:2, 45:7, 65:20, 67:20, 86:17, 87:6, 87:10, 87:19, 88:2, 91:15, 91:20, 91:23, 92:8, 92:10, 92:19, 93:2, 93:6, 93:12, 94:2, 94:6, 94:10, 94:16, 99:23, 100:8, 139:21, 141:15, 141:18, 144:16, 145:17, 150:5, 154:16, 154:21, 155:4, 156:9, 159:6, 161:10, 163:5, 169:5, 170:4, 171:8, 171:14, 172:4, 172:14, 173:5, 173:17, 177:1, 188:2, 188:23, 207:21, 208:1, 208:7, 208:16, 209:18, 213:11, 226:22, 227:2, 227:19, 228:9, 231:17, 231:25, 232:8, 232:20, 233:2, 233:7, 233:9, 236:3, 243:1, 253:1, 257:1, 261:7, 261:21, 264:3, 264:7, 265:4, 288:9,</p>	<p>294:10, 305:13, 337:15, 337:18, 338:15, 339:3, 340:5, 340:12, 342:19, 343:15, 344:2, 344:6, 344:9, 348:9, 378:9, 378:11, 380:1, 383:18</p> <p>muddies [1] - 229:25</p> <p>muddy [1] - 93:21</p> <p>Mugrace [7] - 11:23, 12:23, 35:2, 35:12, 35:17, 39:14, 39:17</p> <p>MUGRACE [1] - 8:2</p> <p>multi [1] - 363:7</p> <p>multiple [3] - 121:9, 303:4, 377:19</p> <p>multiplier [1] - 373:21</p> <p>multipliers [1] - 373:23</p> <p>must [9] - 32:19, 140:19, 149:5, 149:8, 211:12, 283:21, 283:25, 289:15, 368:7</p>	<p>357:2, 364:23</p> <p>necessary [20] - 24:1, 25:4, 40:17, 44:11, 50:12, 58:5, 84:19, 101:13, 135:2, 135:19, 158:24, 174:18, 174:23, 176:17, 176:21, 178:21, 182:10, 210:7, 286:16, 308:17</p> <p>need [106] - 18:25, 23:9, 23:10, 25:4, 25:22, 27:2, 27:6, 27:21, 28:3, 31:21, 32:24, 48:10, 48:11, 49:15, 51:14, 51:19, 52:5, 52:17, 54:24, 54:25, 55:15, 55:16, 64:13, 70:25, 80:11, 80:17, 82:6, 82:13, 82:16, 82:25, 84:22, 86:2, 96:20, 98:6, 98:15, 98:17, 98:18, 98:20, 98:23, 99:1, 102:11, 102:18, 102:24, 106:15, 106:16, 106:18, 106:25, 107:4, 107:6, 107:9, 107:13, 107:15, 107:16, 113:14, 115:13, 116:23, 123:22, 125:24, 129:20, 132:25, 133:11, 134:10, 135:14, 137:2, 137:14, 137:16, 137:19, 140:1, 151:23, 185:2, 215:6, 227:14, 228:22, 230:10, 230:21, 238:22, 246:14, 246:25, 248:12, 253:24, 264:10, 269:23, 272:11, 276:16, 276:17, 276:18, 276:19, 276:25, 290:15, 290:17, 305:24, 307:19, 309:24, 312:3, 315:2, 315:9, 324:18, 339:10, 342:6, 347:2, 352:25, 354:23, 360:19</p> <p>needed [17] - 26:22, 27:1, 28:24, 36:5, 47:14, 48:9, 48:23, 63:6, 72:1, 81:2, 96:19, 108:6, 140:14, 169:17, 202:22, 213:2, 355:6</p> <p>needing [1] - 189:8</p> <p>needs [42] - 28:6, 47:22, 48:8, 55:19, 55:20, 55:23, 55:25, 56:2, 77:10, 95:7, 96:3, 97:1, 97:2, 101:9, 101:16, 101:18, 102:2, 102:18, 104:17, 104:24, 105:16, 105:21, 106:13, 106:14, 108:21, 109:15, 111:5, 112:2, 114:8, 123:11, 128:25, 133:9, 134:25, 135:10, 135:17, 215:7, 220:21, 220:24, 235:5, 256:17, 349:9,</p>
N			
		<p>name [5] - 16:6, 151:25, 174:11, 210:1, 307:24</p> <p>names [2] - 90:11</p> <p>narrow [7] - 45:16, 97:14, 330:22, 333:4, 333:18, 334:5, 334:11</p> <p>narrower [2] - 335:11, 369:5</p> <p>NARUC [29] - 32:1, 311:19, 313:22, 314:6, 314:7, 314:13, 314:14, 314:18, 326:4, 328:7, 328:20, 329:1, 329:4, 329:9, 329:19, 329:22, 330:18, 333:21, 334:4, 334:8, 334:16, 334:19, 344:10, 344:23, 345:4, 347:18, 347:19, 347:23, 378:25</p> <p>nationally [2] - 363:21, 363:23</p> <p>natural [7] - 54:23, 55:13, 96:1, 99:17, 106:12, 116:13, 136:23</p> <p>naturally [1] - 51:2</p> <p>nature [5] - 20:22, 80:20, 135:9, 212:15, 259:5</p> <p>ND [2] - 12:6, 282:5</p> <p>NDPSC [1] - 165:22</p> <p>NDPSC-1-004 [1] - 11:15</p> <p>NDPSC-5-014 [1] - 12:14</p> <p>NDPSC-5-065 [1] - 12:16</p> <p>near [2] - 40:25, 52:13</p> <p>nearly [2] - 19:3, 33:12</p> <p>necessarily [9] - 184:6, 230:10, 289:5, 310:9, 320:15, 323:16, 356:12,</p>	

<p>355:6 negative [7] - 274:18, 275:2, 280:25, 281:1, 300:22, 302:1 NEI [1] - 198:11 neighborhood [1] - 277:8 NERC [5] - 170:8, 170:12, 170:16, 170:19 net [17] - 13:17, 56:25, 107:25, 268:1, 274:10, 274:18, 274:22, 275:2, 275:7, 280:25, 281:1, 291:8, 291:11, 291:13, 291:16, 317:12 network [1] - 58:18 neutral [1] - 345:1 never [3] - 31:16, 150:22, 383:4 nevertheless [1] - 311:15 new [36] - 43:23, 44:4, 47:13, 58:25, 59:9, 59:13, 59:19, 101:25, 103:14, 106:23, 107:6, 109:16, 109:17, 139:1, 139:2, 141:10, 150:21, 151:1, 151:2, 177:14, 177:18, 178:22, 185:19, 190:11, 190:16, 198:4, 224:10, 225:7, 248:5, 254:11, 277:15, 290:16, 300:18, 343:25, 344:2 New [1] - 13:13 newly [1] - 211:12 next [38] - 17:1, 17:12, 19:11, 23:8, 46:2, 46:13, 46:16, 72:7, 81:8, 96:13, 99:2, 102:4, 106:9, 108:21, 111:24, 112:4, 124:22, 136:13, 151:13, 155:3, 155:5, 169:12, 172:13, 172:15, 179:12, 190:23, 198:15, 208:5, 233:5, 250:5, 264:24, 268:4, 286:5, 306:15, 306:18, 341:7, 352:22, 353:18 next-door [1] - 72:7 nice [5] - 139:14, 168:25, 229:16, 266:16, 369:19 Nicollet [3] - 2:7, 59:2, 59:6 night [1] - 384:13 nine [5] - 157:16, 384:3, 384:5, 384:8, 384:9 ninety [1] - 195:8 Nisbet [4] - 134:1, 146:18, 152:16, 152:18 nobody [2] - 140:22, 206:14 noise [1] - 353:18 non [11] - 69:24, 70:2, 70:20, 166:1, 224:21, 224:24, 229:17, 249:16, 250:23,</p>	<p>251:5, 252:2 non-bargaining [6] - 224:21, 224:24, 229:17, 249:16, 250:23, 251:5 non-fuel [4] - 69:24, 70:2, 70:20, 166:1 non-regulated [1] - 252:2 none [2] - 170:17, 357:2 nonhazardous [1] - 289:2 nonlegal [21] - 32:14, 32:21, 33:16, 269:5, 270:4, 270:15, 280:5, 280:7, 280:14, 281:2, 281:4, 281:7, 281:9, 281:17, 283:6, 285:23, 285:24, 287:7, 289:22, 290:8, 290:10 nonlegislative [2] - 9:7, 9:9 nonprofessional [1] - 186:5 nonprofits [1] - 132:20 nonpublic [1] - 173:21 Nonpublic [3] - 9:19, 9:22, 10:9 nonquantified [2] - 60:2, 60:10 nonunion [1] - 113:19 noon [3] - 139:25, 141:1, 384:12 normal [12] - 22:20, 61:9, 144:11, 164:16, 164:18, 164:19, 291:6, 301:13, 333:9, 333:14, 333:15 normalized [2] - 144:10, 144:11 normally [1] - 130:7 NORRELL [109] - 2:15, 17:3, 26:2, 27:19, 37:11, 45:4, 45:10, 45:12, 48:2, 48:3, 64:21, 65:2, 65:10, 65:12, 65:17, 65:23, 65:24, 67:11, 67:14, 67:24, 71:8, 71:12, 71:15, 83:22, 84:7, 84:8, 86:13, 93:11, 134:14, 144:20, 144:22, 145:1, 145:7, 145:11, 145:21, 145:23, 149:25, 154:18, 156:2, 159:10, 159:12, 159:15, 159:19, 161:5, 170:3, 171:11, 173:9, 177:4, 177:6, 181:13, 181:24, 184:15, 187:21, 207:24, 209:10, 213:15, 213:17, 226:7, 226:17, 229:6, 230:3, 230:23, 231:2, 231:3, 231:12, 257:3, 257:5, 261:2, 264:6, 271:17, 271:19, 272:20, 272:22, 281:22, 281:25, 282:6, 282:9, 282:19, 282:21, 288:5, 305:10,</p>	<p>312:20, 312:22, 321:4, 321:7, 324:18, 324:21, 326:15, 326:19, 326:25, 330:3, 330:6, 330:10, 330:15, 330:17, 331:4, 331:7, 331:12, 331:25, 332:11, 332:14, 333:1, 333:2, 333:21, 337:11, 377:14, 377:17, 378:5, 383:17 norrell [2] - 232:13, 238:19 Norrell [82] - 3:5, 3:9, 3:12, 3:17, 4:3, 4:6, 4:10, 4:15, 4:18, 5:3, 5:7, 5:13, 5:19, 5:23, 6:3, 6:7, 6:18, 6:21, 7:3, 7:9, 7:12, 7:16, 7:20, 8:3, 8:6, 8:8, 17:2, 17:4, 17:21, 24:22, 25:8, 25:11, 25:25, 28:12, 37:10, 45:2, 45:9, 46:1, 48:1, 48:19, 57:20, 58:9, 64:25, 65:9, 65:22, 71:7, 75:21, 83:19, 84:6, 86:15, 140:5, 144:18, 151:24, 154:17, 155:21, 156:1, 159:9, 159:18, 165:21, 171:9, 177:3, 181:12, 184:13, 207:22, 209:8, 213:14, 228:1, 228:10, 229:4, 231:1, 257:2, 264:4, 271:16, 288:7, 304:7, 305:9, 312:19, 330:13, 331:22, 332:25, 337:13, 377:13 NORTH [1] - 1:2 North [164] - 1:18, 2:17, 2:23, 12:9, 13:16, 15:8, 17:4, 23:18, 23:21, 23:24, 24:4, 24:18, 27:13, 29:22, 30:19, 31:5, 32:11, 33:7, 34:7, 37:19, 42:1, 42:18, 44:7, 44:15, 44:24, 47:2, 47:8, 47:16, 52:8, 53:6, 58:13, 73:14, 75:18, 78:11, 80:2, 85:10, 90:17, 117:11, 118:10, 118:14, 122:11, 124:9, 124:12, 131:12, 132:3, 132:7, 144:4, 144:13, 145:2, 146:3, 146:19, 147:5, 147:13, 147:22, 148:1, 148:3, 148:15, 150:22, 150:23, 153:2, 153:7, 158:12, 158:14, 158:19, 159:1, 198:16, 210:12, 211:24, 212:17, 235:8, 235:16, 235:23, 266:6, 267:13, 270:17, 272:4, 272:8, 272:13, 273:1, 273:8, 273:11, 273:12, 273:17, 273:20, 276:3, 282:1, 286:13, 287:5, 287:18,</p>	<p>287:25, 294:22, 296:6, 296:7, 304:24, 304:25, 305:3, 308:4, 308:17, 308:19, 308:23, 309:5, 312:6, 314:25, 316:6, 318:12, 320:24, 321:5, 321:20, 322:4, 325:2, 326:6, 326:10, 326:11, 328:1, 346:10, 346:15, 349:20, 349:21, 350:3, 350:9, 350:12, 350:15, 350:23, 351:2, 351:5, 351:12, 352:3, 352:20, 353:14, 353:22, 353:23, 356:18, 358:4, 358:6, 358:10, 358:13, 358:19, 359:16, 359:20, 360:6, 360:25, 361:3, 361:12, 362:5, 363:4, 363:25, 368:8, 368:14, 368:19, 369:4, 369:8, 369:12, 373:24, 374:3, 374:4, 374:13, 376:3, 376:6, 379:14, 382:11, 382:16, 383:1 Northern [5] - 1:6, 11:11, 15:9, 28:17, 40:8 note [7] - 33:19, 36:9, 41:19, 68:22, 74:25, 99:12, 110:22 noted [2] - 41:24, 224:10 notes [2] - 177:21, 286:24 nothing [5] - 37:22, 79:22, 169:9, 230:7, 344:1 notice [1] - 351:10 noticed [1] - 45:18 November [2] - 61:2, 157:18 NRC [8] - 179:7, 179:9, 179:12, 180:5, 180:9, 190:17, 190:21, 200:2 NSP [99] - 3:3, 9:2, 11:16, 12:11, 15:10, 15:25, 16:11, 17:20, 24:16, 24:19, 24:21, 25:19, 25:20, 28:9, 28:10, 45:2, 45:5, 52:11, 52:21, 68:8, 68:12, 68:15, 69:15, 73:13, 74:5, 77:1, 87:16, 87:22, 91:15, 91:17, 92:2, 113:11, 114:8, 114:9, 115:5, 121:16, 122:10, 128:4, 146:2, 152:18, 155:24, 158:15, 165:1, 165:25, 166:2, 166:9, 173:7, 173:10, 173:20, 173:25, 209:7, 209:11, 213:19, 214:8, 214:20, 215:5, 216:17, 216:18, 218:19, 224:18, 229:9, 231:21, 232:15, 236:4, 250:11, 257:12, 265:19,</p>
--	--	--	--

<p>279:14, 280:14, 293:5, 306:14, 307:7, 307:17, 311:13, 315:14, 318:21, 319:3, 319:16, 322:18, 325:1, 327:16, 335:2, 335:15, 335:19, 335:22, 336:2, 346:17, 349:22, 350:4, 350:16, 353:21, 358:7, 375:23, 376:12, 379:14</p> <p>NSP's [12] - 15:20, 23:16, 23:19, 23:23, 24:3, 24:5, 25:1, 25:5, 25:7, 25:15, 333:4, 358:10</p> <p>NSP-Minnesota [15] - 52:21, 68:8, 68:12, 68:15, 113:11, 114:8, 114:9, 115:5, 122:10, 319:16, 325:1, 327:16, 335:19, 346:17, 350:16</p> <p>NSP-Wisconsin [1] - 52:21</p> <p>NSPM [4] - 70:1, 70:20, 310:9, 319:15</p> <p>nuance [2] - 152:20, 152:21</p> <p>nuclear [109] - 29:5, 40:21, 46:8, 46:9, 47:4, 54:12, 63:4, 63:5, 69:1, 80:25, 102:12, 103:22, 105:2, 105:11, 105:15, 105:24, 106:7, 108:19, 109:6, 109:9, 110:2, 112:13, 120:12, 121:15, 121:18, 121:19, 123:5, 126:10, 136:5, 136:8, 136:9, 137:9, 142:6, 142:13, 164:25, 174:16, 174:22, 175:17, 175:18, 175:23, 175:25, 176:1, 176:2, 176:10, 176:11, 176:12, 180:22, 181:1, 182:5, 182:14, 182:19, 183:6, 183:23, 186:7, 188:7, 188:9, 188:12, 188:16, 188:22, 189:6, 189:10, 189:13, 189:19, 189:21, 190:22, 191:2, 191:7, 191:19, 192:10, 192:13, 192:17, 193:7, 193:12, 194:24, 195:7, 196:3, 196:21, 197:23, 198:13, 199:1, 199:10, 201:3, 201:6, 201:10, 202:15, 203:18, 206:11, 210:6, 212:18, 212:20, 212:22, 212:24, 213:1, 213:5, 213:7, 220:5, 220:23, 221:2, 221:7, 254:4, 254:12, 254:16, 261:9, 261:10, 261:14, 354:13, 354:15, 354:17, 354:23</p>	<p>Nuclear [9] - 174:12, 175:5, 175:20, 183:10, 190:2, 195:20, 199:11, 199:21, 201:8</p> <p>number [29] - 24:14, 30:1, 66:7, 86:25, 87:11, 165:13, 170:11, 193:7, 209:7, 214:14, 216:22, 226:6, 244:14, 253:13, 254:5, 254:6, 280:11, 285:22, 315:15, 316:12, 316:14, 325:15, 342:20, 342:24, 366:8, 372:10, 378:16, 378:20</p> <p>Number [1] - 13:4</p> <p>numbered [1] - 87:18</p> <p>numbers [18] - 79:17, 79:20, 90:25, 181:23, 198:6, 198:7, 229:10, 263:9, 272:9, 273:22, 296:23, 299:5, 301:5, 331:13, 334:2, 369:12, 369:15, 378:18</p> <p>numerator [1] - 346:20</p> <p>numerous [1] - 229:7</p> <p>nutshell [1] - 215:4</p>	<p>objects [1] - 286:9</p> <p>obligated [3] - 301:1, 302:6, 302:8</p> <p>obligation [22] - 49:14, 49:17, 50:4, 50:24, 82:7, 269:4, 279:18, 283:3, 283:8, 283:24, 283:25, 284:2, 284:4, 284:9, 284:12, 286:20, 289:19, 290:11, 298:2, 298:6, 301:15</p> <p>obligations [5] - 128:22, 143:13, 286:15, 300:11, 302:5</p> <p>observed [1] - 136:17</p> <p>obtain [2] - 182:12, 194:13</p> <p>obtaining [1] - 194:10</p> <p>obviously [8] - 191:3, 199:1, 230:21, 280:2, 317:15, 344:19, 348:5, 365:2</p> <p>occasion [1] - 217:8</p> <p>occupy [1] - 59:19</p> <p>occupying [1] - 59:20</p> <p>occur [19] - 160:21, 189:23, 206:5, 260:9, 310:10, 315:14, 315:15, 317:1, 317:4, 317:7, 317:24, 325:14, 325:15, 352:5, 355:10, 367:23, 376:22, 377:1, 377:2</p> <p>occurred [6] - 66:12, 66:18, 88:14, 221:6, 284:4, 318:4</p> <p>occurring [2] - 114:21, 343:7</p> <p>occurs [4] - 97:15, 97:16, 222:4, 319:9</p> <p>OF [2] - 1:2, 1:11</p> <p>off-peak [1] - 310:23</p> <p>offer [9] - 49:20, 51:16, 145:24, 192:3, 210:18, 218:5, 259:16, 260:15, 332:9</p> <p>offered [6] - 41:14, 89:11, 210:21, 210:24, 219:22, 224:13</p> <p>offering [4] - 89:2, 89:4, 89:8</p> <p>offhand [1] - 166:12</p> <p>Office [1] - 16:4</p> <p>office [1] - 59:8</p> <p>Officer [1] - 174:13</p> <p>officer [1] - 16:6</p> <p>official [1] - 118:8</p> <p>offset [2] - 130:17, 276:9</p> <p>offsets [1] - 281:19</p> <p>offsetting [1] - 293:17</p> <p>often [4] - 55:17, 106:19, 191:11, 276:1</p> <p>oftentimes [1] - 152:23</p> <p>oil [1] - 276:25</p> <p>oils [3] - 276:23, 278:8, 298:7</p>	<p>old [7] - 59:1, 116:12, 136:19, 178:25, 345:13, 345:14</p> <p>on-the [1] - 194:23</p> <p>on-the-job [1] - 194:20</p> <p>on-the-spot [1] - 218:4</p> <p>once [9] - 78:19, 87:9, 95:10, 115:18, 136:11, 179:14, 275:12, 278:21, 289:14</p> <p>One [1] - 93:3</p> <p>one [186] - 18:22, 21:6, 22:1, 25:5, 25:14, 36:7, 39:21, 41:1, 45:17, 47:18, 48:8, 53:2, 61:5, 61:10, 62:6, 65:1, 66:18, 66:25, 67:10, 79:17, 79:19, 80:4, 86:3, 90:5, 90:16, 93:4, 94:20, 99:2, 99:12, 103:8, 106:8, 108:16, 111:9, 117:6, 119:10, 122:14, 127:22, 128:23, 139:10, 140:13, 141:1, 141:6, 147:24, 150:13, 151:12, 153:25, 157:13, 158:5, 160:7, 162:3, 165:18, 178:12, 182:2, 183:21, 184:25, 186:15, 188:9, 188:19, 192:20, 193:1, 193:8, 193:13, 199:17, 200:11, 200:18, 201:4, 202:18, 202:22, 204:11, 204:19, 205:5, 206:8, 214:7, 217:12, 217:14, 218:7, 219:14, 226:10, 226:12, 226:22, 226:23, 231:19, 234:25, 239:2, 241:12, 247:13, 263:11, 276:8, 279:12, 279:16, 279:23, 285:13, 285:25, 286:6, 287:19, 287:20, 290:19, 292:9, 294:4, 295:15, 295:16, 295:23, 296:1, 297:6, 297:14, 297:21, 298:25, 301:3, 301:4, 303:5, 303:9, 304:2, 304:24, 304:25, 308:16, 314:8, 315:1, 315:4, 315:5, 315:9, 315:23, 316:25, 317:19, 319:8, 319:10, 319:23, 320:16, 320:25, 321:15, 321:16, 323:7, 323:25, 324:1, 324:5, 324:8, 324:11, 327:14, 328:15, 329:8, 330:1, 334:9, 335:12, 337:3, 337:19, 342:11, 345:20, 345:22, 347:20, 347:21, 349:14, 352:8, 352:16, 352:21, 353:4, 353:9, 353:17, 354:22, 355:7,</p>
O			
	<p>O&M [8] - 69:24, 70:2, 156:20, 157:7, 157:14, 166:1, 166:8, 192:14</p> <p>o'clock [9] - 25:4, 140:21, 141:1, 141:6, 341:5, 384:4, 384:6, 384:8, 384:9</p> <p>O'CONNOR [2] - 3:15, 173:13</p> <p>O'Connor [17] - 9:16, 9:17, 9:19, 10:22, 172:15, 172:17, 173:4, 173:18, 174:3, 174:11, 177:1, 177:7, 181:15, 202:4, 204:11, 208:3, 221:9</p> <p>oath [3] - 37:13, 120:10, 266:3</p> <p>object [2] - 332:20, 369:22</p> <p>objected [1] - 370:5</p> <p>objection [11] - 45:3, 65:19, 67:18, 67:21, 93:10, 134:13, 155:25, 173:7, 226:20, 282:15, 286:23</p> <p>objections [5] - 145:15, 145:18, 170:2, 209:9, 332:18</p> <p>objective [5] - 205:22, 210:25, 225:22, 238:2, 238:4</p> <p>objectively [1] - 237:24</p> <p>objectives [1] - 157:20</p>		

<p>357:13, 357:21, 358:5, 358:6, 358:9, 358:15, 359:13, 359:17, 360:3, 361:16, 361:25, 366:9, 372:3, 372:4, 373:17, 377:9, 379:6, 379:8, 379:23, 380:5, 381:21</p> <p>one's [1] - 219:25</p> <p>one-hour [1] - 354:22</p> <p>one-sixth [2] - 358:15, 359:17</p> <p>one-third [5] - 358:6, 358:9, 359:13</p> <p>ones [8] - 102:4, 136:22, 145:6, 169:17, 275:21, 275:24, 288:23</p> <p>ongoing [6] - 40:17, 95:23, 96:25, 97:22, 105:25, 240:7</p> <p>Onofre [2] - 194:15, 197:10</p> <p>Op [1] - 250:24</p> <p>open [4] - 168:23, 253:18, 253:20, 254:5</p> <p>open-ended [1] - 168:23</p> <p>Opening [16] - 10:19, 10:21, 10:22, 10:23, 10:24, 11:3, 11:4, 11:5, 11:7, 11:8, 11:10, 12:17, 12:18, 12:21, 12:23, 12:24</p> <p>opening [19] - 18:10, 26:8, 26:17, 28:11, 38:10, 38:16, 40:3, 73:11, 73:20, 140:8, 155:17, 156:18, 174:7, 182:2, 209:24, 267:5, 307:21, 307:22, 323:1</p> <p>operate [17] - 47:5, 47:11, 49:12, 82:8, 112:5, 120:22, 122:15, 136:12, 136:15, 137:17, 137:20, 138:24, 139:4, 139:5, 139:8, 187:9, 309:20</p> <p>operates [1] - 319:3</p> <p>operating [37] - 35:3, 52:20, 61:9, 70:20, 102:15, 109:11, 109:21, 112:1, 114:7, 115:4, 116:3, 121:9, 122:12, 122:14, 136:21, 137:25, 174:18, 174:19, 174:23, 175:11, 175:23, 176:9, 176:21, 177:14, 178:9, 178:22, 187:15, 195:23, 205:16, 241:18, 241:20, 252:5, 257:22, 269:7, 281:13, 289:15, 319:10</p> <p>operation [7] - 61:10, 115:12, 191:25, 195:6, 311:20, 311:22, 337:6</p> <p>operational [3] - 62:14, 161:13, 213:7</p>	<p>operations [25] - 78:8, 78:11, 115:25, 156:20, 156:22, 157:3, 158:13, 158:14, 158:23, 162:20, 167:5, 175:17, 175:19, 175:23, 176:1, 176:2, 182:20, 182:25, 186:2, 186:12, 200:14, 200:24, 203:23, 239:14, 301:13</p> <p>Operator [1] - 111:1</p> <p>operator [1] - 205:17</p> <p>operators [2] - 81:15, 207:6</p> <p>opinion [9] - 64:4, 92:1, 152:21, 314:14, 319:7, 320:6, 347:24, 349:23, 356:21</p> <p>opportunities [10] - 117:5, 168:3, 168:5, 214:15, 217:19, 218:14, 224:1, 225:17, 253:17, 278:24</p> <p>opportunity [47] - 28:18, 28:23, 40:9, 43:19, 48:14, 84:20, 84:24, 104:10, 159:3, 176:23, 204:14, 212:8, 220:3, 221:5, 222:12, 222:14, 224:13, 229:1, 235:11, 236:15, 239:19, 241:3, 244:17, 244:25, 245:6, 246:5, 246:20, 247:1, 247:3, 247:9, 247:13, 248:8, 248:18, 248:25, 249:2, 249:7, 249:8, 249:12, 249:14, 250:6, 258:18, 259:23, 259:25, 260:4, 260:15, 260:25, 262:16</p> <p>oppose [1] - 147:2</p> <p>opposed [5] - 53:21, 126:22, 257:12, 333:24, 378:15</p> <p>opposing [1] - 371:4</p> <p>opposite [1] - 367:23</p> <p>opposition [1] - 25:18</p> <p>optimize [1] - 185:21</p> <p>option [6] - 89:2, 89:4, 89:8, 89:9, 178:12, 178:13</p> <p>options [4] - 103:8, 329:5, 329:22, 329:25</p> <p>oranges [1] - 365:25</p> <p>Order [1] - 13:4</p> <p>order [37] - 25:1, 50:25, 51:14, 54:12, 54:15, 81:4, 86:25, 87:10, 87:11, 100:5, 102:14, 102:25, 137:15, 140:17, 141:1, 141:5, 143:1, 143:6, 148:21, 182:22, 202:23, 205:20, 205:22, 225:6, 235:6, 287:24, 306:5, 330:12, 339:6, 339:13, 340:24, 342:12, 342:25, 343:18,</p>	<p>343:19, 362:21, 382:11</p> <p>Orders [1] - 13:13</p> <p>orders [16] - 201:11, 287:1, 287:4, 287:7, 303:22, 338:10, 338:12, 338:16, 339:9, 339:16, 339:23, 340:1, 340:21, 341:9, 341:14, 343:21</p> <p>organization [11] - 121:3, 133:10, 148:11, 156:21, 158:24, 216:21, 225:24, 255:12, 260:14, 363:9</p> <p>organizations [4] - 76:25, 132:25, 152:23, 363:19</p> <p>organized [3] - 123:11, 230:5, 250:16</p> <p>original [12] - 62:12, 79:8, 112:22, 112:25, 157:9, 158:2, 163:14, 176:6, 291:10, 291:14, 292:25, 300:14</p> <p>originally [4] - 54:21, 299:10, 302:6, 302:7</p> <p>OSHA [1] - 189:17</p> <p>otherwise [5] - 76:12, 118:7, 129:24, 270:8, 380:17</p> <p>Otter [6] - 378:3, 382:9, 382:12, 382:13, 382:21</p> <p>Ottetail [5] - 150:25, 153:17, 218:20, 251:12, 251:13</p> <p>ought [4] - 131:15, 320:1, 334:21, 366:16</p> <p>ourselves [8] - 22:1, 51:13, 110:5, 113:20, 116:8, 149:14, 183:3, 201:20</p> <p>outage [12] - 61:4, 65:10, 66:6, 66:8, 66:11, 111:14, 114:23, 114:25, 136:11, 136:13, 159:24, 381:7</p> <p>Outage [1] - 12:6</p> <p>outages [9] - 65:25, 66:3, 114:21, 160:12, 160:21, 170:17, 317:25, 355:12, 377:4</p> <p>outcome [6] - 44:16, 85:8, 178:20, 207:11, 239:22, 241:24</p> <p>outcomes [8] - 85:15, 122:24, 187:20, 220:3, 239:15, 240:5, 242:22, 258:6</p> <p>outlays [1] - 127:10</p> <p>outline [4] - 24:11, 142:1, 163:14, 163:20</p> <p>outlined [1] - 238:12</p> <p>outlines [1] - 163:14</p> <p>outpaced [1] - 276:11</p> <p>output [5] - 105:19, 116:14, 178:17, 179:2, 179:3</p> <p>outs [1] - 164:14</p>	<p>outside [8] - 50:19, 143:19, 168:19, 182:7, 206:4, 218:16, 293:24, 309:23</p> <p>outstanding [1] - 177:8</p> <p>overall [21] - 52:3, 52:18, 52:23, 56:20, 58:15, 75:4, 77:13, 115:22, 117:3, 131:5, 149:2, 157:5, 211:10, 211:21, 212:14, 271:24, 272:23, 273:6, 275:7, 309:11, 309:15</p> <p>overarching [1] - 85:14</p> <p>overlooking [1] - 142:4</p> <p>overly [3] - 228:7, 229:23, 230:7</p> <p>overruns [2] - 63:3, 63:5</p> <p>overseas [2] - 207:12, 207:16</p> <p>oversees [1] - 187:11</p> <p>oversight [1] - 50:15</p> <p>overspending [1] - 113:24</p> <p>overstated [1] - 33:11</p> <p>overview [2] - 100:19, 181:15</p> <p>own [15] - 59:17, 90:10, 90:16, 90:22, 111:4, 153:10, 185:24, 201:2, 206:15, 251:17, 251:18, 254:16, 363:4, 363:5</p> <p>owned [9] - 91:8, 120:21, 123:21, 252:11, 254:24, 255:16, 255:20, 258:1, 295:3</p> <p>owning [1] - 107:18</p>
P			
<p>P.A [1] - 2:10</p> <p>p.m [14] - 66:17, 141:3, 141:6, 208:13, 264:16, 305:19, 306:2, 306:4, 306:12, 317:6, 341:21, 383:24, 384:14</p> <p>package [4] - 35:25, 224:6, 239:13, 243:25</p> <p>packages [4] - 113:22, 243:13, 247:24</p> <p>Page [1] - 3:2</p> <p>page [80] - 39:16, 39:21, 39:22, 39:23, 63:23, 68:2, 68:3, 68:4, 69:9, 69:12, 69:23, 70:5, 70:11, 70:15, 70:19, 74:9, 75:16, 78:3, 88:3, 141:24, 146:15, 146:22, 146:24, 148:22, 152:4, 161:14, 163:13, 165:21, 171:19, 177:21, 180:15, 181:2, 181:3, 181:8, 192:25, 222:2,</p>			

<p>224:25, 231:3, 268:8, 269:1, 269:9, 271:21, 272:18, 272:19, 272:20, 274:1, 274:2, 280:24, 287:2, 296:24, 296:25, 297:1, 297:8, 297:9, 297:10, 297:13, 298:1, 304:16, 318:5, 320:19, 321:2, 321:4, 323:11, 325:19, 327:7, 328:12, 328:23, 330:20, 334:18, 338:4, 344:13, 345:24, 352:12, 354:2, 373:19</p> <p>pages [6] - 39:19, 145:4, 145:10, 145:11, 146:15, 329:13</p> <p>paid [7] - 128:4, 224:14, 225:11, 236:13, 247:12, 251:16, 251:19</p> <p>pains [4] - 155:13, 172:24, 209:1, 266:12</p> <p>paint [1] - 371:2</p> <p>pancake [1] - 19:6</p> <p>paper [1] - 289:1</p> <p>papers [2] - 283:3, 285:18</p> <p>paperwork [1] - 19:20</p> <p>par [1] - 184:8</p> <p>paragraph [10] - 265:15, 265:16, 268:4, 270:20, 274:17, 285:18, 286:21, 342:14, 343:1</p> <p>paragraphs [1] - 335:1</p> <p>parameters [2] - 215:8, 229:3</p> <p>paraphrasing [1] - 367:10</p> <p>parent [2] - 152:13, 152:14</p> <p>part [76] - 21:8, 36:16, 43:4, 43:11, 44:1, 53:5, 59:4, 60:12, 62:15, 62:16, 62:17, 69:11, 71:8, 71:9, 76:3, 80:23, 81:8, 81:10, 81:11, 91:24, 101:10, 101:12, 101:22, 102:17, 103:23, 105:18, 107:8, 107:11, 108:17, 110:4, 114:2, 121:3, 121:5, 122:12, 123:4, 124:18, 128:14, 128:23, 129:5, 130:24, 135:25, 146:2, 146:11, 148:1, 148:10, 158:15, 164:10, 188:10, 202:13, 216:15, 218:6, 219:25, 221:3, 237:17, 239:2, 244:12, 244:21, 245:9, 251:20, 262:19, 274:2, 294:4, 299:17, 308:9, 308:14, 308:19, 320:22, 340:21, 341:7, 376:14, 376:15, 376:17, 382:25</p> <p>participate [3] - 132:25,</p>	<p>199:13, 260:25</p> <p>participating [1] - 184:22</p> <p>particular [22] - 48:5, 52:6, 54:6, 55:15, 56:20, 69:6, 72:4, 78:13, 80:25, 82:18, 96:9, 161:2, 162:24, 163:18, 181:2, 219:16, 227:23, 312:4, 326:3, 346:23, 351:4, 375:6</p> <p>particularly [6] - 54:22, 70:24, 133:2, 182:10, 213:9, 349:25</p> <p>particulars [3] - 51:20, 53:1, 60:7</p> <p>parties [3] - 26:15, 44:10, 270:7</p> <p>parts [4] - 61:13, 78:1, 92:1, 372:3</p> <p>party [8] - 27:10, 27:15, 218:17, 223:12, 242:12, 247:4, 255:8, 256:3</p> <p>pass [2] - 265:5, 341:2</p> <p>passages [1] - 341:15</p> <p>passed [4] - 38:15, 53:11, 155:20, 307:4</p> <p>passing [2] - 173:3, 209:5</p> <p>past [13] - 21:3, 21:24, 60:16, 75:19, 196:1, 197:25, 198:10, 198:13, 198:14, 207:4, 252:15, 270:9</p> <p>Pat [2] - 94:8, 379:12</p> <p>path [1] - 201:19</p> <p>paths [1] - 186:6</p> <p>Patrick [1] - 17:17</p> <p>pattern [5] - 63:10, 131:20, 136:1, 164:24, 326:24</p> <p>Paul [1] - 136:21</p> <p>PAULSON [2] - 38:17, 265:4</p> <p>PAULSON [1] - 173:5</p> <p>Paulson [4] - 16:22, 173:3, 209:4, 265:2</p> <p>Pavlovic [11] - 11:25, 12:3, 12:22, 31:25, 39:14, 39:17, 43:5, 308:9, 308:10, 368:18, 372:9</p> <p>PAVLOVIC [1] - 7:15</p> <p>Pavlovic's [2] - 30:18, 311:18</p> <p>pay [77] - 19:5, 34:1, 51:5, 72:20, 117:23, 118:11, 128:18, 148:23, 149:4, 149:6, 149:17, 162:15, 211:3, 211:5, 211:14, 212:2, 214:15, 214:19, 214:20, 214:23, 219:21, 219:24, 219:25, 220:1, 222:13, 222:18, 222:19, 222:23, 223:3, 223:16, 224:5, 224:17, 225:22, 228:11, 228:12, 231:5,</p>	<p>234:17, 235:9, 236:8, 236:9, 236:20, 237:8, 237:9, 237:13, 238:16, 238:24, 239:9, 239:10, 239:13, 240:22, 240:25, 242:14, 242:15, 242:16, 243:14, 243:18, 245:18, 245:19, 245:23, 248:2, 251:15, 257:21, 258:3, 258:19, 258:20, 259:20, 262:8, 262:23, 263:18, 267:23, 268:3, 289:4, 361:13, 361:14, 363:25</p> <p>pay-for [1] - 238:16</p> <p>payable [1] - 225:16</p> <p>paying [16] - 36:1, 61:20, 105:19, 117:15, 117:16, 211:4, 214:18, 237:9, 237:10, 246:8, 246:10, 248:6, 256:4, 258:5, 258:12, 258:16</p> <p>payments [2] - 36:2, 219:3</p> <p>payout [4] - 235:6, 259:4, 259:6, 259:20</p> <p>pays [1] - 236:10</p> <p>PCS [1] - 282:5</p> <p>peak [95] - 73:4, 102:11, 102:17, 103:3, 108:9, 310:1, 310:2, 310:6, 310:8, 310:10, 310:14, 310:17, 310:23, 311:3, 312:2, 312:4, 313:1, 313:8, 313:9, 313:12, 315:2, 315:3, 315:4, 315:5, 315:13, 315:14, 315:15, 316:5, 316:8, 316:12, 316:15, 316:18, 316:19, 316:22, 317:1, 317:7, 317:12, 317:18, 317:24, 318:4, 323:13, 324:7, 324:13, 324:14, 325:1, 327:8, 327:9, 329:18, 329:21, 333:17, 336:16, 346:5, 346:16, 346:17, 348:25, 349:18, 349:20, 349:22, 350:5, 350:9, 350:15, 350:23, 351:3, 351:7, 351:13, 351:25, 352:2, 352:4, 352:10, 352:17, 352:22, 353:21, 353:22, 354:22, 355:1, 355:7, 355:10, 355:14, 365:8, 365:9, 365:10, 365:14, 376:21, 377:1, 377:9, 378:21, 379:14, 379:22, 380:23, 380:25, 381:1, 381:13, 381:22</p> <p>peaked [1] - 363:5</p> <p>peaker [3] - 337:9, 382:23, 382:24</p>	<p>peaking [11] - 55:16, 55:18, 106:13, 106:14, 107:5, 107:6, 107:13, 379:16, 379:17, 379:18</p> <p>peaks [27] - 31:24, 313:6, 315:3, 326:6, 326:7, 326:12, 327:1, 327:3, 330:21, 330:22, 333:3, 333:4, 334:10, 346:14, 346:15, 348:23, 349:2, 349:6, 349:12, 350:3, 350:13, 351:24, 352:10, 365:19, 369:4, 369:6, 378:16</p> <p>Peaks [1] - 12:11</p> <p>peeking [1] - 46:15</p> <p>peer [1] - 67:5</p> <p>peers [1] - 223:4</p> <p>penalties [12] - 37:14, 37:15, 155:8, 155:14, 172:18, 172:25, 208:21, 209:2, 265:23, 266:4, 266:13, 306:22</p> <p>penalty [1] - 147:7</p> <p>Pending [1] - 13:6</p> <p>pending [10] - 43:12, 89:23, 90:6, 91:7, 91:20, 92:2, 107:1, 107:7</p> <p>pension [26] - 13:21, 41:16, 88:7, 88:12, 88:13, 89:9, 89:12, 128:1, 128:7, 128:18, 128:21, 129:19, 129:21, 129:25, 130:8, 130:12, 130:13, 130:17, 143:9, 143:13, 143:17, 143:18, 225:16, 244:18, 256:15, 256:21</p> <p>Pension [1] - 13:22</p> <p>pensions [2] - 128:3, 128:17</p> <p>people [45] - 20:16, 20:24, 23:5, 26:11, 51:11, 77:22, 81:14, 86:19, 101:24, 108:14, 113:24, 115:7, 116:20, 119:16, 128:5, 129:25, 139:14, 153:10, 182:6, 182:16, 183:11, 183:17, 183:18, 185:2, 185:21, 186:6, 194:14, 194:17, 196:14, 196:18, 223:20, 225:7, 236:25, 243:18, 244:23, 245:9, 249:5, 251:19, 253:25, 254:1, 254:18, 360:20, 366:18, 367:14, 378:19</p> <p>Peppin [3] - 10:15, 11:9, 351:9</p> <p>PEPPIN [1] - 6:2</p> <p>Pepsi [1] - 254:25</p> <p>per [11] - 69:14, 69:15, 115:9, 149:4, 149:8, 149:13,</p>
--	--	--	---

<p>161:20, 162:4, 162:10, 257:9, 258:23</p> <p>per-state [1] - 115:9</p> <p>percent [128] - 15:13, 15:23, 19:3, 34:18, 40:16, 51:4, 57:3, 57:10, 57:17, 58:4, 58:20, 68:7, 69:24, 75:8, 79:13, 105:16, 108:15, 109:14, 110:1, 111:7, 111:11, 111:13, 112:11, 112:15, 117:24, 124:10, 124:11, 124:13, 125:4, 132:8, 137:17, 142:10, 144:3, 144:5, 144:12, 146:6, 154:6, 165:14, 165:16, 165:25, 166:1, 166:3, 178:22, 178:24, 191:1, 193:16, 194:23, 195:6, 195:8, 211:2, 211:25, 212:2, 222:12, 222:16, 229:20, 229:21, 230:7, 235:12, 235:13, 235:19, 235:24, 244:4, 244:7, 244:8, 245:3, 245:7, 245:15, 245:16, 245:18, 245:23, 245:24, 246:1, 246:2, 246:5, 246:11, 247:15, 247:17, 247:22, 262:8, 262:17, 262:18, 262:21, 262:23, 263:4, 263:5, 263:6, 263:9, 263:12, 263:13, 263:14, 263:15, 272:8, 273:11, 273:17, 273:18, 273:19, 273:21, 292:25, 293:9, 293:11, 296:9, 296:12, 325:13, 327:20, 327:25, 328:3, 355:22, 359:6, 362:3, 374:2, 374:5, 374:6, 374:11, 375:15, 375:16, 375:19, 379:5, 380:13, 380:20</p> <p>percentage [21] - 113:1, 222:11, 244:20, 247:24, 262:17, 318:14, 328:4, 328:6, 346:17, 353:23, 365:5, 368:19, 373:25, 374:2, 374:12, 374:14, 374:19, 374:20, 375:14, 375:15, 375:16</p> <p>percentages [1] - 357:20</p> <p>perfect [4] - 100:5, 102:13, 134:5, 137:4</p> <p>perform [3] - 85:2, 185:7, 259:7</p> <p>Performance [1] - 158:20</p> <p>performance [85] - 21:6, 52:7, 52:14, 52:19, 52:20, 52:24, 67:7, 72:5, 78:23, 81:19, 84:25, 144:2, 149:2,</p>	<p>161:12, 162:25, 163:2, 215:11, 215:16, 215:20, 215:25, 216:1, 216:2, 216:8, 216:9, 216:10, 216:13, 218:6, 218:12, 220:3, 221:3, 221:18, 221:20, 221:23, 221:25, 233:14, 233:15, 233:20, 234:2, 234:4, 234:7, 234:8, 234:10, 234:11, 234:19, 234:21, 235:1, 236:11, 236:16, 236:19, 236:21, 236:23, 236:25, 237:8, 237:14, 237:20, 237:21, 237:22, 237:25, 238:8, 238:10, 238:12, 238:16, 239:23, 240:4, 240:5, 240:15, 241:6, 241:12, 241:19, 241:25, 245:20, 248:20, 248:22, 249:4, 249:10, 257:8, 257:19, 258:19, 258:22, 259:10, 259:13, 260:1, 260:16</p> <p>performance-based [4] - 221:18, 234:11, 237:25, 241:6</p> <p>performed [2] - 36:3, 162:11</p> <p>performing [10] - 52:13, 130:16, 174:22, 239:18, 239:25, 240:1, 241:16, 248:24, 249:6, 249:10</p> <p>perhaps [17] - 25:4, 48:19, 58:1, 105:6, 111:17, 127:4, 140:11, 149:22, 227:25, 233:3, 242:8, 335:8, 339:21, 353:22, 363:17, 365:11, 367:17</p> <p>period [33] - 34:24, 88:22, 102:14, 131:13, 133:18, 133:23, 140:22, 143:25, 163:25, 165:19, 179:11, 185:9, 185:10, 190:11, 196:15, 200:16, 256:17, 275:4, 284:20, 284:22, 284:23, 285:8, 294:23, 298:23, 300:17, 315:19, 315:23, 317:11, 322:15, 347:25, 351:4, 352:1, 368:17</p> <p>periodically [1] - 61:4</p> <p>periods [3] - 71:3, 122:3, 335:7</p> <p>perjury [14] - 37:14, 37:18, 155:8, 155:14, 172:18, 172:25, 208:21, 209:2, 265:23, 266:4, 266:5, 266:13, 306:22</p> <p>PERKETT [2] - 4:9, 266:20</p> <p>Perkett [16] - 9:23, 9:25, 10:24, 32:7, 32:19, 140:15,</p>	<p>264:24, 265:11, 265:22, 266:25, 271:13, 271:20, 288:16, 289:25, 304:6, 305:15</p> <p>Perkett's [2] - 33:6, 265:9</p> <p>permanently [1] - 275:16</p> <p>permission [3] - 64:22, 159:16, 281:23</p> <p>permutation [1] - 379:3</p> <p>person [12] - 130:7, 165:24, 166:6, 167:1, 167:4, 167:5, 171:22, 199:2, 223:2, 252:3, 253:19, 261:8</p> <p>personal [2] - 152:21, 198:12</p> <p>personally [4] - 128:9, 192:4, 366:14, 369:21</p> <p>personnel [1] - 59:8</p> <p>perspective [7] - 51:2, 72:25, 102:4, 279:1, 303:13, 335:6, 336:12</p> <p>persuade [1] - 30:23</p> <p>pertain [1] - 36:13</p> <p>pertaining [1] - 58:16</p> <p>Petition [2] - 9:4, 9:5</p> <p>petitions [2] - 18:3, 18:5</p> <p>phaseout [2] - 153:22, 153:24</p> <p>phasing [1] - 190:4</p> <p>phenomenal [1] - 191:25</p> <p>philosophy [11] - 181:20, 181:25, 182:1, 187:15, 214:22, 222:18, 223:21, 224:3, 250:17, 255:13, 365:22</p> <p>phone [1] - 148:15</p> <p>physical [2] - 201:1, 201:13</p> <p>physically [1] - 203:18</p> <p>physician [1] - 185:14</p> <p>pick [3] - 273:16, 361:4, 367:13</p> <p>picked [2] - 254:14, 358:8</p> <p>picking [2] - 129:18, 297:18</p> <p>picture [3] - 103:11, 137:21, 192:8</p> <p>pie [1] - 320:9</p> <p>piece [12] - 58:21, 115:15, 121:10, 121:11, 188:22, 189:21, 273:10, 284:15, 291:14, 301:10, 340:25</p> <p>pieces [3] - 96:20, 178:11, 273:9</p> <p>piecing [1] - 322:5</p> <p>pipeline [2] - 147:8, 186:21</p> <p>pipelines [1] - 195:17</p> <p>PJM [1] - 364:12</p> <p>place [33] - 20:1, 42:5, 43:8, 43:25, 57:11, 88:22, 94:1, 97:10, 128:6, 150:25, 161:20, 179:4, 179:10, 181:5, 181:17, 187:8,</p>	<p>197:11, 215:14, 220:9, 221:8, 221:14, 221:16, 221:18, 240:3, 248:11, 248:21, 269:18, 269:22, 312:6, 322:10, 359:11</p> <p>places [7] - 39:11, 69:22, 74:2, 90:14, 185:23, 194:18, 229:7</p> <p>plan [55] - 50:19, 95:4, 96:4, 98:12, 102:6, 125:4, 129:22, 130:8, 138:23, 143:12, 143:17, 149:22, 153:24, 162:25, 163:15, 163:18, 163:21, 164:1, 176:17, 181:1, 181:20, 181:25, 188:6, 200:9, 201:2, 201:5, 218:13, 222:14, 223:25, 233:16, 233:19, 235:21, 236:10, 237:16, 238:24, 239:20, 240:9, 240:13, 246:13, 246:24, 252:12, 253:24, 258:16, 322:18, 334:24, 335:2, 335:4, 336:4, 336:9, 336:12, 349:23, 350:6, 377:7, 381:4, 381:23</p> <p>Plan [1] - 158:20</p> <p>planing [1] - 56:17</p> <p>planned [9] - 24:13, 126:13, 134:24, 143:16, 240:5, 315:20, 355:12, 377:6, 381:8</p> <p>planners [1] - 81:15</p> <p>planning [28] - 56:11, 64:8, 80:16, 80:21, 80:24, 81:5, 95:22, 96:6, 96:24, 98:19, 98:24, 120:25, 121:1, 157:3, 210:14, 246:7, 311:20, 311:22, 312:2, 316:24, 317:9, 324:15, 335:17, 335:21, 345:18, 349:14, 354:25, 376:22</p> <p>plans [16] - 82:19, 82:21, 99:14, 99:21, 128:8, 181:16, 181:18, 181:19, 207:11, 225:18, 240:3, 255:1, 292:12, 331:1, 334:13, 349:6</p> <p>Plant [1] - 13:14</p> <p>plant [56] - 54:12, 55:11, 55:12, 55:13, 55:14, 55:18, 60:20, 60:22, 61:9, 63:2, 81:18, 103:22, 105:11, 105:20, 105:24, 106:12, 112:1, 116:11, 116:12, 116:16, 116:20, 126:10, 134:19, 135:11, 136:6, 137:9, 138:11, 157:15, 157:19, 158:8, 175:7, 178:17, 187:19, 189:20,</p>
---	---	---	---

<p>191:14, 194:12, 194:14, 194:15, 195:9, 197:17, 197:21, 197:25, 198:4, 200:8, 200:10, 200:25, 201:4, 204:14, 276:3, 284:14, 291:8, 291:12, 291:13, 291:17, 354:12, 365:5</p> <p>plants [50] - 40:21, 46:10, 47:4, 47:5, 69:1, 81:1, 102:12, 102:14, 105:12, 105:15, 105:23, 106:1, 106:7, 106:16, 107:5, 107:14, 109:9, 109:11, 109:17, 109:20, 110:2, 111:19, 135:22, 136:9, 136:14, 136:18, 136:19, 136:24, 137:5, 137:16, 137:20, 137:25, 165:5, 174:22, 174:24, 175:23, 176:21, 177:11, 177:16, 182:24, 186:22, 190:21, 190:22, 198:13, 201:11, 202:15, 203:18, 207:3, 279:15, 315:25</p> <p>play [4] - 118:5, 198:17, 274:11, 364:3</p> <p>playing [1] - 138:18</p> <p>Pleasant [1] - 90:19</p> <p>pleasure [1] - 384:2</p> <p>plow [1] - 27:3</p> <p>plug [1] - 135:6</p> <p>plus [4] - 186:1, 198:14, 237:10, 322:18</p> <p>point [66] - 19:23, 20:10, 22:12, 27:4, 56:15, 69:2, 75:1, 77:22, 79:14, 96:12, 96:16, 97:19, 98:7, 112:18, 123:3, 124:5, 141:23, 177:25, 179:17, 184:11, 188:15, 190:24, 191:8, 251:10, 252:9, 252:17, 253:22, 264:19, 283:22, 284:9, 284:11, 285:12, 286:1, 286:3, 298:22, 299:3, 301:2, 301:12, 301:23, 302:3, 303:8, 316:23, 317:8, 320:9, 320:11, 322:3, 323:16, 323:22, 325:11, 329:24, 340:2, 340:24, 345:5, 345:22, 348:10, 348:17, 353:4, 355:2, 355:4, 355:17, 360:9, 362:20, 363:12, 369:19, 376:25, 377:6</p> <p>pointed [4] - 20:10, 107:9, 151:24, 206:3</p> <p>points [14] - 26:19, 32:1, 125:2, 146:25, 311:15,</p>	<p>352:24, 353:7, 354:1, 366:8, 366:9, 374:14, 375:15, 375:16, 375:22</p> <p>poles [15] - 32:20, 269:14, 269:15, 269:20, 269:21, 269:22, 269:23, 275:15, 275:16, 277:8, 277:10, 277:11, 279:23, 290:16, 290:17</p> <p>policies [2] - 122:19, 122:20</p> <p>policy [14] - 42:16, 44:23, 100:19, 148:6, 198:22, 199:11, 199:14, 199:15, 203:23, 215:5, 361:12, 361:14, 361:19, 363:10</p> <p>Policy [1] - 345:15</p> <p>political [1] - 133:1</p> <p>poll [1] - 148:5</p> <p>ponds [2] - 298:8</p> <p>pony [2] - 126:14, 126:24</p> <p>pool [2] - 212:23, 252:13</p> <p>popular [1] - 121:18</p> <p>population [2] - 196:24, 353:1</p> <p>portfolio [9] - 18:12, 31:23, 57:4, 57:11, 110:1, 110:6, 110:21, 121:12, 191:7</p> <p>portion [19] - 143:20, 143:23, 149:12, 171:19, 178:3, 188:7, 188:16, 188:17, 194:22, 217:15, 235:14, 251:25, 252:2, 276:6, 280:5, 298:6, 308:5, 308:18, 376:10</p> <p>portions [1] - 376:13</p> <p>pose [1] - 226:24</p> <p>posed [3] - 28:21, 63:9, 314:2</p> <p>position [16] - 48:4, 48:6, 64:4, 72:16, 114:12, 121:23, 128:3, 147:5, 147:9, 147:12, 147:19, 153:14, 210:2, 210:23, 253:21, 258:4</p> <p>positioned [2] - 106:3, 201:20</p> <p>positioning [4] - 102:2, 105:7, 108:5, 110:5</p> <p>positions [6] - 147:21, 212:20, 221:8, 245:17, 253:19, 254:6</p> <p>positive [2] - 168:13, 300:21</p> <p>positively [1] - 186:9</p> <p>possibility [4] - 187:11, 199:3, 256:16, 361:6</p> <p>possible [13] - 38:12, 41:23, 49:13, 49:19, 50:23, 64:16, 86:25, 113:8, 123:1, 204:1, 226:8, 277:5, 379:7</p> <p>possibly [3] - 51:6, 116:4,</p>	<p>164:21</p> <p>potential [16] - 13:8, 18:22, 19:3, 56:17, 63:3, 95:6, 125:10, 169:16, 186:20, 211:18, 245:4, 309:22, 314:22, 315:18, 372:10, 375:5</p> <p>potentially [4] - 63:7, 107:4, 252:11, 314:25</p> <p>Power [6] - 1:6, 11:11, 15:10, 28:17, 40:9, 195:20</p> <p>power [85] - 40:21, 40:22, 43:7, 43:13, 46:9, 47:4, 47:13, 49:15, 54:13, 54:14, 55:3, 55:11, 55:12, 55:13, 55:14, 55:18, 60:20, 60:22, 61:19, 69:1, 81:1, 81:16, 90:8, 91:3, 91:9, 102:12, 103:22, 105:11, 105:15, 105:19, 105:23, 105:24, 106:7, 106:12, 106:16, 107:25, 109:9, 109:11, 109:16, 109:18, 109:20, 110:2, 111:19, 112:6, 116:17, 116:20, 135:11, 135:22, 135:25, 136:4, 136:9, 136:12, 136:13, 136:18, 136:19, 136:23, 136:24, 137:6, 137:10, 137:17, 137:20, 137:25, 174:25, 175:4, 175:9, 175:19, 178:3, 178:16, 178:24, 179:24, 180:4, 180:12, 180:14, 182:24, 186:22, 197:23, 199:10, 201:10, 202:15, 206:14, 206:18, 315:8, 336:13</p> <p>practical [4] - 176:16, 200:21, 335:5, 336:11</p> <p>practice [9] - 31:5, 31:19, 42:2, 214:17, 224:5, 241:8, 242:11, 242:13, 267:21</p> <p>practices [12] - 29:11, 32:11, 32:16, 42:1, 116:9, 210:22, 214:23, 222:19, 242:16, 255:12, 255:25, 263:18</p> <p>practitioner [3] - 337:7, 345:11, 372:12</p> <p>practitioners [1] - 329:15</p> <p>Prairie [18] - 40:21, 54:3, 54:6, 54:10, 54:12, 55:1, 55:6, 63:2, 94:19, 95:12, 96:8, 96:14, 174:15, 177:15, 177:18, 191:24, 202:4, 204:14</p> <p>precedence [2] - 72:11, 72:13</p> <p>precedent [8] - 29:15, 29:22, 42:13, 44:17, 85:12, 235:8, 235:17, 235:23</p>	<p>precipitously [1] - 99:18</p> <p>precise [1] - 317:15</p> <p>precisely [1] - 96:23</p> <p>precision [1] - 183:16</p> <p>preclude [1] - 262:12</p> <p>precludes [3] - 212:3, 262:9, 262:24</p> <p>predetermined [2] - 214:13, 215:14</p> <p>predict [5] - 317:2, 317:6, 323:13, 355:9, 368:1</p> <p>predictability [3] - 104:18, 182:25, 190:8</p> <p>predictable [3] - 190:1, 191:15, 191:16</p> <p>predicted [1] - 158:5</p> <p>prefer [1] - 319:5</p> <p>preferred [3] - 318:6, 329:8, 366:9</p> <p>prefiled [3] - 26:14, 156:11, 209:19</p> <p>prehearing [2] - 24:12, 26:13</p> <p>premise [1] - 324:3</p> <p>premises [1] - 323:25</p> <p>premium [1] - 182:12</p> <p>prepare [1] - 379:22</p> <p>prepared [9] - 155:17, 226:5, 226:21, 331:17, 332:1, 332:2, 332:22, 381:1, 381:2</p> <p>prepares [2] - 67:3, 348:25</p> <p>preparing [3] - 101:6, 101:8, 380:25</p> <p>preplanning [1] - 21:19</p> <p>present [23] - 15:6, 17:23, 17:24, 18:8, 25:8, 26:17, 28:9, 28:18, 37:4, 37:7, 37:10, 47:13, 140:16, 155:7, 172:17, 208:20, 210:14, 228:16, 270:9, 284:3, 289:18, 300:12, 302:9</p> <p>PRESENT [1] - 2:2</p> <p>presentation [4] - 279:20, 286:16, 291:12, 291:16</p> <p>presented [3] - 52:8, 173:19, 269:9</p> <p>presenting [1] - 18:17</p> <p>presents [3] - 98:12, 109:7, 260:6</p> <p>preserves [1] - 63:25</p> <p>preside [1] - 16:6</p> <p>president [2] - 16:23, 40:8</p> <p>President [1] - 174:12</p> <p>pressure [2] - 158:3, 183:17</p> <p>pressures [1] - 183:8</p> <p>presume [1] - 149:15</p> <p>presumption [2] - 364:10, 367:17</p> <p>pretty [17] - 20:21, 120:18,</p>
---	--	---	---

<p>131:3, 131:20, 131:21, 137:22, 190:15, 194:20, 198:7, 204:18, 294:2, 326:7, 336:9, 347:13, 361:25, 363:6, 381:19</p> <p>prevalent [5] - 211:7, 214:17, 241:2, 241:7, 242:13</p> <p>prevent [1] - 187:9</p> <p>preventative [2] - 115:16, 115:21</p> <p>prevented [1] - 158:5</p> <p>prevention [1] - 187:7</p> <p>previous [6] - 68:15, 80:3, 130:5, 167:11, 168:23, 339:16</p> <p>previously [4] - 31:6, 233:10, 263:13, 312:13</p> <p>price [1] - 112:4</p> <p>priced [4] - 47:6, 56:25, 62:19, 62:20</p> <p>prices [4] - 96:1, 96:11, 99:17, 114:11</p> <p>primarily [1] - 134:23</p> <p>primary [4] - 68:18, 193:14, 205:21, 309:4</p> <p>prime [2] - 153:9, 337:5</p> <p>principled [4] - 72:17, 84:12, 84:14, 320:15</p> <p>principles [18] - 29:16, 29:21, 35:11, 36:21, 44:15, 72:25, 73:20, 84:11, 84:14, 84:16, 85:4, 85:7, 85:16, 85:22, 86:1, 86:7, 313:20, 313:21</p> <p>Printout [1] - 12:9</p> <p>priorities [1] - 41:2</p> <p>prioritization [2] - 80:21, 82:5</p> <p>priority [1] - 158:12</p> <p>prison [2] - 37:21, 266:8</p> <p>privately [2] - 250:20, 295:4</p> <p>privately-held [2] - 250:20, 295:4</p> <p>proactive [1] - 160:16</p> <p>probabilities [3] - 186:18, 334:14, 352:24</p> <p>probability [10] - 187:13, 207:9, 207:15, 315:22, 317:21, 317:23, 347:5, 347:19, 374:7, 374:16</p> <p>problem [4] - 115:18, 206:8, 354:7, 356:5</p> <p>problems [4] - 81:18, 237:5, 237:7, 372:6</p> <p>procedural [1] - 16:8</p> <p>procedure [2] - 24:12, 24:15</p> <p>procedures [2] - 27:18, 207:5</p> <p>proceed [19] - 28:9, 37:23, 38:19, 40:5, 58:11, 65:22,</p>	<p>87:24, 93:15, 95:18, 96:13, 141:14, 155:22, 156:17, 173:12, 174:10, 209:13, 209:24, 282:20</p> <p>proceeded [3] - 36:23, 54:15, 96:8</p> <p>proceeding [16] - 16:24, 18:6, 24:10, 29:13, 32:6, 36:15, 43:16, 53:12, 53:14, 97:21, 104:8, 104:21, 156:13, 209:21, 210:3, 346:1</p> <p>proceedings [7] - 15:1, 18:15, 27:8, 27:15, 47:20, 321:8, 329:6</p> <p>process [26] - 12:10, 19:11, 20:7, 61:15, 81:13, 81:22, 82:4, 83:9, 95:9, 95:14, 95:22, 95:23, 96:24, 99:11, 139:11, 157:4, 158:18, 162:14, 164:11, 179:11, 198:4, 218:7, 260:18, 283:1, 308:19, 354:16</p> <p>processed [1] - 276:20</p> <p>processes [2] - 42:1, 157:5</p> <p>produce [6] - 54:13, 92:22, 130:8, 169:6, 242:1, 242:5</p> <p>produced [1] - 174:17</p> <p>produces [1] - 323:3</p> <p>producing [4] - 137:7, 137:10, 240:14, 240:15</p> <p>product [4] - 276:17, 276:18, 276:20, 276:22</p> <p>production [30] - 31:22, 138:13, 138:19, 273:5, 292:14, 292:17, 292:19, 293:4, 293:6, 293:14, 303:4, 308:5, 308:15, 309:8, 309:9, 309:24, 311:23, 314:9, 317:5, 318:14, 319:12, 319:17, 336:19, 336:21, 336:23, 336:24, 337:1, 347:22, 350:1, 364:21</p> <p>productive [2] - 140:22, 161:25</p> <p>productivity [2] - 161:21, 241:10</p> <p>products [1] - 276:24</p> <p>professional [4] - 186:5, 211:17, 344:22, 345:1</p> <p>program [39] - 128:21, 149:5, 149:11, 160:16, 180:22, 184:23, 188:22, 195:1, 196:3, 210:5, 210:6, 212:10, 212:13, 212:15, 215:9, 218:3, 220:9, 220:18, 221:3, 221:4, 224:12, 225:5, 225:25, 226:4, 233:22, 235:12,</p>	<p>235:19, 237:1, 238:1, 238:13, 239:4, 241:14, 257:22, 258:13, 259:3, 259:20, 261:11, 261:14</p> <p>programs [35] - 54:4, 128:6, 165:9, 165:18, 185:4, 186:4, 194:4, 194:5, 194:6, 194:8, 195:7, 195:11, 195:17, 195:18, 195:19, 195:24, 210:7, 212:18, 213:1, 213:2, 213:4, 213:6, 214:5, 214:12, 220:5, 224:20, 224:21, 227:5, 239:6, 242:25, 250:15, 250:22, 251:4, 252:7</p> <p>progressing [1] - 157:25</p> <p>project [35] - 46:6, 53:9, 54:11, 54:16, 54:19, 55:1, 55:6, 55:8, 55:10, 55:22, 55:23, 55:24, 55:25, 57:8, 59:5, 81:6, 82:1, 95:10, 95:12, 95:15, 95:18, 96:9, 96:14, 96:16, 97:24, 97:25, 107:21, 123:6, 135:18, 157:25, 162:11, 175:1, 178:7, 178:19, 290:4</p> <p>projected [12] - 15:21, 35:10, 78:10, 78:23, 79:25, 164:10, 324:22, 325:1, 379:13, 379:18</p> <p>projecting [1] - 97:12</p> <p>projection [6] - 78:17, 78:18, 79:2, 79:22, 135:9</p> <p>projections [1] - 78:15</p> <p>projects [48] - 44:1, 46:8, 46:11, 46:12, 46:15, 46:24, 46:25, 54:6, 56:15, 56:20, 57:10, 57:12, 57:22, 58:12, 63:5, 80:17, 80:21, 81:21, 81:23, 82:2, 82:6, 82:11, 82:21, 90:6, 90:7, 90:10, 90:15, 90:21, 90:23, 91:6, 91:8, 95:7, 95:10, 95:19, 96:18, 97:18, 103:15, 103:21, 104:9, 104:11, 107:3, 107:8, 107:10, 107:18, 107:20, 157:10</p> <p>promote [3] - 217:6, 367:6, 367:8</p> <p>promoting [2] - 148:13, 196:21</p> <p>prompted [2] - 206:11, 292:8</p> <p>promulgating [1] - 175:21</p> <p>proper [2] - 116:7, 281:21</p> <p>properly [1] - 72:20</p> <p>property [6] - 23:16, 23:20, 23:23, 24:3, 270:10, 270:12</p> <p>prophecy [3] - 138:4, 138:18, 139:6</p>	<p>proportion [1] - 142:6</p> <p>proportional [1] - 132:9</p> <p>proportionally [1] - 132:7</p> <p>proportions [1] - 142:2</p> <p>proposal [22] - 29:14, 30:14, 30:18, 32:8, 32:13, 33:13, 33:14, 33:25, 34:21, 35:5, 35:19, 35:20, 55:10, 88:24, 89:3, 95:9, 106:23, 143:24, 151:15, 268:18, 268:20, 268:22</p> <p>proposals [8] - 24:10, 29:9, 36:19, 36:24, 41:15, 41:25, 151:12, 321:10</p> <p>propose [6] - 43:20, 90:16, 90:22, 212:1, 262:7, 332:15</p> <p>Proposed [2] - 9:5, 9:8</p> <p>proposed [27] - 15:16, 24:5, 29:20, 32:6, 33:15, 34:17, 35:9, 35:17, 36:17, 41:20, 42:7, 56:13, 57:6, 57:8, 81:20, 82:2, 103:9, 103:16, 106:11, 125:19, 135:5, 267:18, 282:13, 309:6, 312:12, 321:9, 321:21</p> <p>proposes [3] - 308:10, 314:19, 314:20</p> <p>proposing [4] - 88:15, 88:17, 90:8, 150:21</p> <p>protect [2] - 278:2, 278:8</p> <p>protected [1] - 33:24</p> <p>protecting [1] - 157:23</p> <p>protection [1] - 187:19</p> <p>protects [2] - 258:8, 258:11</p> <p>protocol [1] - 265:11</p> <p>prove [1] - 62:19</p> <p>proven [1] - 200:15</p> <p>provide [58] - 15:11, 16:5, 22:20, 24:2, 50:25, 51:15, 52:16, 55:2, 57:14, 63:25, 64:6, 64:24, 72:22, 75:23, 79:17, 98:18, 102:16, 104:17, 110:6, 132:23, 133:11, 153:7, 156:25, 157:21, 167:22, 168:17, 175:2, 180:16, 180:21, 190:9, 206:17, 206:18, 206:19, 210:4, 210:9, 211:23, 217:23, 221:6, 225:4, 225:8, 227:20, 239:14, 241:11, 242:9, 246:18, 252:11, 270:1, 283:2, 294:1, 294:18, 308:16, 315:9, 316:4, 329:14, 331:23, 345:6, 347:13, 373:24</p> <p>provided [16] - 33:9, 35:12, 78:7, 78:12, 78:18, 78:19, 78:20, 115:24, 144:9,</p>
---	--	--	--

<p>224:9, 317:20, 332:3, 335:22, 339:16, 347:12, 351:18</p> <p>providers [1] - 336:13</p> <p>provides [13] - 57:14, 84:24, 84:25, 98:14, 121:21, 164:5, 212:13, 212:21, 314:14, 314:16, 325:6, 343:11, 367:14</p> <p>providing [18] - 18:24, 58:15, 58:17, 65:3, 100:19, 115:3, 175:15, 211:15, 212:3, 222:10, 222:13, 238:9, 240:10, 241:16, 241:24, 262:10, 262:25, 267:24</p> <p>proxy [1] - 365:15</p> <p>prudence [3] - 44:10, 125:7, 314:24</p> <p>prudency [2] - 43:25, 91:5</p> <p>prudent [8] - 42:21, 42:22, 49:18, 50:14, 72:21, 97:22, 126:17, 126:21</p> <p>prudently [10] - 62:20, 84:18, 257:20, 325:13, 355:21, 357:4, 362:4, 366:17, 371:17, 380:13</p> <p>PSC [22] - 12:25, 25:9, 25:12, 25:25, 26:3, 27:11, 49:3, 65:4, 65:17, 65:18, 65:21, 67:17, 67:22, 145:14, 145:20, 152:2, 159:14, 282:18, 287:6, 296:21, 332:15, 332:24</p> <p>PU-07-776 [1] - 270:4</p> <p>PU-12-813 [1] - 15:15</p> <p>pU-12-813 [1] - 1:6</p> <p>PU-400-92 [1] - 362:22</p> <p>PU-400-92-399 [2] - 342:11, 342:24</p>	<p>pulled [1] - 135:6</p> <p>pulling [2] - 75:1, 228:18</p> <p>pulse [1] - 217:8</p> <p>pumps [1] - 178:24</p> <p>punch [1] - 201:12</p> <p>punishable [2] - 37:20, 266:7</p> <p>purchase [9] - 43:8, 43:13, 90:9, 91:3, 91:9, 110:24, 111:17, 136:3, 315:8</p> <p>pure [2] - 347:25, 353:4</p> <p>purely [1] - 135:24</p> <p>purpose [5] - 27:9, 57:24, 210:3, 219:12, 318:13</p> <p>purposes [7] - 211:8, 280:13, 280:17, 303:19, 324:24, 331:16, 335:18</p> <p>pursuing [1] - 115:11</p> <p>push [1] - 88:19</p> <p>pushed [1] - 112:3</p> <p>pushing [1] - 140:24</p> <p>put [47] - 22:24, 50:6, 54:24, 55:3, 57:17, 61:8, 80:8, 83:3, 95:8, 97:10, 124:2, 124:5, 124:24, 126:5, 127:14, 130:8, 161:19, 162:25, 183:8, 206:17, 220:9, 221:7, 221:13, 221:16, 221:18, 227:3, 227:11, 233:24, 239:8, 240:3, 258:14, 260:22, 277:15, 284:8, 284:14, 291:14, 299:10, 299:11, 299:12, 299:13, 303:5, 323:11, 325:23, 339:14, 340:23, 346:11, 367:19</p> <p>puts [2] - 182:7, 183:17</p> <p>putting [5] - 83:11, 167:24, 220:15, 227:13, 349:2</p>	<p>questioning [7] - 24:22, 63:20, 84:5, 140:9, 165:20, 264:18, 330:13</p> <p>questions [88] - 21:3, 21:13, 24:24, 25:13, 27:17, 28:21, 45:17, 67:9, 84:9, 86:14, 86:16, 94:4, 99:24, 100:13, 108:25, 112:9, 118:20, 119:12, 119:19, 125:11, 134:18, 139:20, 139:23, 141:9, 141:20, 143:10, 144:18, 144:19, 145:25, 149:25, 150:4, 150:5, 154:13, 154:15, 159:4, 161:6, 161:8, 171:5, 171:10, 172:7, 172:8, 176:24, 187:21, 197:3, 197:15, 203:3, 207:20, 213:14, 226:10, 231:13, 231:19, 236:4, 249:18, 250:7, 256:21, 256:23, 261:3, 261:5, 261:24, 264:1, 264:2, 267:14, 288:6, 288:8, 292:5, 292:9, 297:19, 303:24, 305:7, 305:9, 305:12, 305:15, 332:7, 337:12, 337:16, 341:17, 342:3, 349:25, 373:4, 375:24, 376:19, 377:10, 377:13, 378:6, 378:8, 380:4, 383:12</p> <p>quick [2] - 74:1, 166:24</p> <p>quickly [4] - 136:8, 137:8, 137:9, 167:24</p> <p>quite [14] - 20:5, 20:6, 45:22, 152:24, 182:17, 187:14, 194:9, 265:25, 276:1, 294:20, 332:20, 353:10, 353:20, 375:18</p> <p>quote [2] - 328:16, 342:14</p> <p>quoted [1] - 254:7</p> <p>quoting [3] - 326:4, 328:20, 372:13</p>	<p>ramp-down [1] - 165:17</p> <p>ramp-up [1] - 165:7</p> <p>ramped [1] - 136:10</p> <p>ramping [1] - 136:16</p> <p>ramps [1] - 137:11</p> <p>random [1] - 317:2</p> <p>RANDY [1] - 2:4</p> <p>Randy [1] - 18:9</p> <p>range [21] - 34:18, 98:19, 98:24, 185:9, 245:2, 245:4, 247:16, 330:22, 333:4, 333:6, 333:7, 334:6, 334:11, 369:5, 374:9, 374:10, 374:12, 374:22, 374:25, 375:9</p> <p>rankings [3] - 68:7, 68:9, 68:19</p> <p>rate [117] - 15:20, 15:22, 15:25, 16:22, 20:18, 21:24, 22:17, 23:19, 23:22, 24:2, 24:5, 28:24, 31:17, 32:9, 35:1, 35:18, 36:12, 40:10, 40:13, 40:17, 41:7, 41:22, 43:2, 43:5, 43:12, 44:2, 44:20, 48:21, 50:10, 52:5, 52:6, 52:25, 53:20, 56:8, 59:4, 76:20, 79:2, 80:3, 80:23, 84:20, 89:20, 91:24, 92:1, 92:3, 92:7, 101:8, 101:24, 101:25, 102:9, 103:10, 103:17, 104:3, 104:4, 104:8, 104:22, 105:4, 105:7, 105:10, 105:25, 107:8, 107:12, 108:3, 112:15, 116:2, 119:11, 119:15, 119:24, 124:20, 124:22, 125:9, 127:2, 141:21, 144:7, 151:5, 151:10, 157:8, 158:16, 160:2, 163:17, 167:11, 168:19, 168:23, 175:6, 188:15, 193:17, 212:3, 212:16, 216:13, 222:23, 228:1, 238:5, 249:5, 251:15, 262:9, 262:19, 262:24, 270:9, 274:7, 274:10, 280:10, 281:19, 281:20, 281:21, 287:10, 288:4, 290:12, 293:6, 295:9, 295:16, 303:22, 304:13, 321:17, 365:24, 375:5, 375:6, 382:14</p> <p>Rate [3] - 1:6, 9:4, 9:6</p> <p>ratemaking [27] - 29:10, 29:15, 29:19, 29:21, 30:2, 34:5, 35:11, 42:1, 42:4, 42:13, 44:15, 72:18, 73:1, 73:21, 73:22, 75:4, 84:11, 84:12, 84:14, 84:17, 86:1,</p>
<p>Public [37] - 2:16, 2:22, 9:11, 9:13, 9:14, 9:16, 9:17, 9:20, 9:23, 9:25, 10:3, 10:5, 10:6, 10:8, 10:11, 10:12, 10:14, 10:15, 10:17, 10:18, 15:6, 16:3, 17:5, 17:7, 18:7, 24:18, 24:23, 52:21, 52:22, 74:11, 114:9, 114:10, 147:14, 203:11, 282:1, 332:4, 345:15</p> <p>public [17] - 17:7, 17:23, 20:4, 20:6, 22:13, 22:20, 23:18, 23:21, 23:24, 24:4, 156:23, 173:21, 176:1, 205:21, 286:16, 356:9, 378:1</p> <p>PUBLIC [2] - 1:3, 11:17</p> <p>publicly [1] - 258:1</p> <p>publicly-owned [1] - 258:1</p> <p>PUC [1] - 203:16</p> <p>pull [2] - 180:20, 227:18</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Q</p> <p>qualification [3] - 185:4, 185:7, 185:13</p> <p>qualifications [1] - 194:11</p> <p>qualified [6] - 176:18, 185:6, 188:5, 194:9, 194:14, 194:17</p> <p>qualifies [1] - 36:4</p> <p>qualify [2] - 186:17, 269:2</p> <p>quality [1] - 158:25</p> <p>quantifiable [5] - 238:2, 238:13, 238:17, 242:22, 256:2</p> <p>quantify [2] - 230:2, 250:21</p> <p>quarter [5] - 68:7, 99:5, 99:6, 146:17, 201:18</p> <p>quarterly [2] - 78:9, 78:14</p> <p>question-and-answer [1] - 325:23</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">R</p> <p>radial [1] - 365:7</p> <p>rail [1] - 278:3</p> <p>raise [8] - 38:3, 51:5, 155:11, 172:21, 180:12, 208:24, 266:10, 306:25</p> <p>Raised [1] - 13:6</p> <p>raised [6] - 18:1, 36:10, 142:17, 143:11, 144:1, 146:10</p> <p>raising [3] - 72:14, 225:13, 225:24</p> <p>ramifications [1] - 182:8</p> <p>ramp [5] - 136:6, 136:7, 136:9, 165:7, 165:17</p>	<p>Rate [3] - 1:6, 9:4, 9:6</p> <p>ratemaking [27] - 29:10, 29:15, 29:19, 29:21, 30:2, 34:5, 35:11, 42:1, 42:4, 42:13, 44:15, 72:18, 73:1, 73:21, 73:22, 75:4, 84:11, 84:12, 84:14, 84:17, 86:1,</p>

<p>86:8, 281:18, 283:11, 285:14, 313:20, 313:21 ratepayer [3] - 19:1, 19:7, 153:20 ratepayers [11] - 32:17, 32:25, 33:1, 47:1, 126:15, 130:9, 146:7, 198:22, 257:12, 267:22, 320:5 rates [49] - 13:18, 15:10, 15:13, 15:23, 16:1, 19:3, 21:3, 21:7, 24:1, 34:14, 36:16, 36:22, 43:11, 49:22, 62:22, 74:13, 103:11, 103:12, 103:19, 117:16, 126:18, 127:17, 193:10, 268:19, 280:15, 280:20, 281:7, 283:13, 286:1, 287:1, 287:5, 287:8, 287:12, 287:13, 287:19, 287:20, 287:21, 287:23, 287:25, 288:4, 290:21, 290:22, 295:8, 296:7, 308:20, 311:9, 320:4, 367:14, 381:7 Rates [1] - 13:6 rather [11] - 35:15, 39:14, 59:12, 103:16, 115:18, 175:13, 204:22, 303:9, 351:20, 353:1, 371:9 rating [5] - 215:25, 236:23, 237:1, 238:9, 249:10 ratings [5] - 216:8, 216:9, 236:21, 237:21, 248:23 ratio [1] - 328:1 rationale [3] - 58:9, 74:24, 143:7 re [8] - 13:20, 219:23, 220:2, 220:21, 220:24, 222:14, 239:22, 300:24 re-earn [4] - 219:23, 220:2, 222:14, 239:22 re-earned [2] - 220:21, 220:24 re-recognized [1] - 300:24 reach [2] - 77:20, 367:9 react [2] - 50:20, 53:20 reaction [1] - 53:22 reactor [3] - 178:24, 191:24, 205:18 read [20] - 26:11, 26:14, 26:16, 112:18, 254:15, 262:6, 265:10, 265:12, 265:13, 267:5, 269:11, 286:7, 286:18, 289:14, 292:4, 319:3, 334:25, 340:7, 341:14, 382:11 readdress [1] - 94:11 readily [1] - 60:15 reading [1] - 334:20 readopted [2] - 321:25,</p>	<p>322:2 reads [2] - 149:19, 330:20 ready [3] - 28:8, 179:7, 179:8 real [4] - 74:1, 114:4, 346:22, 350:25 reality [1] - 280:6 realize [2] - 101:21, 302:2 realized [1] - 301:24 really [66] - 19:23, 20:7, 22:20, 52:16, 69:19, 75:3, 80:15, 86:4, 86:10, 95:23, 98:3, 98:5, 99:16, 107:16, 107:17, 108:10, 111:19, 113:12, 113:14, 119:7, 121:17, 124:20, 131:23, 137:22, 138:23, 139:3, 164:17, 167:22, 189:10, 191:11, 214:17, 215:13, 215:15, 216:9, 217:25, 218:6, 223:14, 225:12, 225:23, 238:15, 239:24, 243:12, 244:15, 250:15, 253:12, 254:11, 258:5, 258:13, 277:17, 278:5, 292:5, 301:20, 301:25, 303:17, 320:7, 323:16, 329:4, 333:19, 345:7, 355:13, 362:20, 365:16, 369:10, 371:1, 379:11 reason [22] - 31:18, 58:10, 74:14, 127:18, 135:7, 167:17, 186:15, 200:11, 200:19, 272:6, 280:4, 291:4, 291:6, 313:19, 317:15, 317:16, 347:12, 349:5, 362:7, 366:15, 378:19, 382:19 reasonable [16] - 23:22, 24:2, 24:8, 34:14, 34:19, 43:2, 72:21, 84:18, 125:13, 125:25, 212:5, 212:15, 229:4, 262:22, 263:16, 263:20 reasonableness [2] - 210:4, 317:21 reasonably [5] - 30:8, 35:13, 62:19, 286:10, 356:10 reasons [19] - 20:12, 74:18, 79:19, 190:6, 210:7, 212:12, 219:4, 239:16, 240:2, 279:22, 313:18, 317:20, 335:13, 348:1, 354:4, 355:8, 356:13, 366:11, 366:25 reassembly [1] - 158:6 reassessing [2] - 94:18, 94:21 rebuttable [1] - 364:9 Rebuttal [1] - 9:12, 9:17, 9:18, 9:20, 9:21, 9:24,</p>	<p>10:3, 10:6, 10:10, 10:13, 10:18 rebuttal [38] - 39:11, 41:14, 63:24, 74:2, 74:9, 75:16, 78:3, 88:3, 143:2, 143:3, 148:20, 151:17, 157:12, 173:22, 175:11, 177:22, 180:15, 181:6, 181:7, 181:8, 220:4, 245:22, 254:2, 266:25, 268:5, 269:4, 269:8, 271:4, 307:16, 308:2, 311:21, 320:19, 326:17, 326:20, 337:21, 337:23, 345:25, 352:13 receive [9] - 36:4, 179:23, 212:8, 223:13, 238:6, 247:5, 248:23, 259:4, 260:1 received [2] - 34:2, 307:17 Received [6] - 9:3, 10:2, 11:2, 12:2, 13:2, 14:2 receives [1] - 185:6 receiving [1] - 223:5 recent [2] - 212:21, 382:11 recently [2] - 195:19, 224:8 Recess [4] - 84:2, 141:3, 330:11, 341:19 recess [8] - 140:25, 208:11, 264:14, 305:18, 306:2, 340:11, 341:16, 383:25 recessed [1] - 384:14 Recessed [1] - 306:4 recipe [1] - 182:19 recognition [4] - 196:20, 217:21, 218:2, 218:3 recognize [11] - 41:10, 42:15, 103:5, 259:25, 260:15, 284:13, 284:19, 310:14, 344:16, 352:9, 354:10 recognized [9] - 30:25, 259:17, 259:21, 270:12, 298:14, 299:10, 300:24, 310:20, 316:7 recognizes [5] - 309:9, 309:16, 310:1, 310:15, 311:18 recognizing [2] - 212:5, 309:14 recollect [1] - 147:17 recommend [1] - 309:1 recommendation [5] - 33:4, 34:9, 43:22, 179:16, 308:9 recommendations [5] - 43:3, 267:22, 268:6, 268:8, 268:25 recommended [4] - 34:11, 272:23, 308:8, 311:6 recommends [3] - 43:6,</p>	<p>268:9, 313:14 reconcile [1] - 69:16 reconsideration [2] - 342:13, 343:19 reconvene [4] - 264:13, 305:20, 384:1, 384:10 reconvened [1] - 306:12 record [38] - 15:2, 15:4, 16:10, 19:21, 20:13, 21:10, 22:1, 22:2, 23:3, 25:22, 26:10, 27:9, 29:23, 30:4, 31:18, 32:3, 39:5, 40:11, 42:14, 43:16, 53:15, 84:3, 151:15, 156:12, 208:12, 209:20, 227:20, 234:24, 253:23, 264:16, 265:21, 286:8, 287:16, 307:8, 307:23, 330:4, 336:8, 341:21 recorded [3] - 27:8, 47:21 recording [1] - 28:2 records [2] - 134:2, 134:4 recover [23] - 32:23, 32:24, 33:20, 43:1, 43:20, 84:17, 103:19, 127:4, 127:17, 130:14, 154:6, 193:18, 211:18, 212:6, 268:1, 269:24, 320:14, 355:21, 362:3, 362:15, 366:17, 380:12, 380:19 recovered [6] - 36:13, 43:9, 62:4, 269:25, 283:12, 291:9 recovering [6] - 34:4, 191:2, 244:6, 245:24, 295:16, 379:5 recovery [35] - 33:12, 40:23, 41:17, 41:20, 43:6, 43:13, 60:13, 62:21, 75:8, 89:22, 92:3, 92:6, 103:25, 147:20, 150:21, 212:1, 212:3, 212:16, 219:13, 235:11, 235:18, 247:20, 261:18, 262:7, 262:9, 262:19, 262:21, 262:24, 263:13, 269:1, 270:9, 280:9, 325:7, 325:10, 357:1 RE CROSS [4] - 145:22, 257:4, 377:16, 378:10 Recross [14] - 3:9, 4:6, 4:18, 4:19, 5:7, 5:7, 5:15, 5:23, 5:23, 6:14, 7:5, 7:12, 7:19, 8:6 RE CROSS-EXAMINATION [4] - 145:22, 257:4, 377:16, 378:10 Recross-examination [14] - 3:9, 4:6, 4:18, 4:19, 5:7, 5:7, 5:15, 5:23, 5:23, 6:14, 7:5, 7:12, 7:19, 8:6</p>
---	---	---	---

<p>recruit [2] - 194:16, 253:24</p> <p>recruiting [4] - 176:17, 195:10, 196:16, 254:10</p> <p>Red [2] - 300:22, 314:25</p> <p>redefined [2] - 175:18, 189:14</p> <p>redefining [1] - 189:21</p> <p>redesign [1] - 240:13</p> <p>redirect [6] - 139:22, 150:14, 171:7, 256:25, 304:1, 373:6</p> <p>Redirect [11] - 3:8, 4:12, 4:18, 5:6, 5:10, 5:15, 5:22, 7:3, 7:12, 7:20, 8:6</p> <p>REDIRECT [3] - 141:17, 304:4, 373:10</p> <p>redo [1] - 239:5</p> <p>redress [1] - 77:16</p> <p>reduce [12] - 30:20, 41:13, 54:1, 56:21, 56:25, 88:19, 104:19, 107:19, 116:10, 205:20, 213:7, 225:1</p> <p>reduced [13] - 13:10, 54:18, 57:13, 130:13, 130:16, 183:23, 222:4, 222:7, 226:11, 226:12, 226:15, 228:11, 228:13</p> <p>reduces [1] - 281:19</p> <p>reducing [2] - 226:3, 273:6</p> <p>reduction [7] - 13:10, 226:12, 226:15, 268:23, 281:21, 308:10, 359:19</p> <p>redundancy [1] - 47:12</p> <p>reengineered [1] - 178:12</p> <p>reestablished [1] - 289:17</p> <p>reevaluate [2] - 301:14, 301:15</p> <p>reevaluated [1] - 302:15</p> <p>refamiliarize [1] - 320:25</p> <p>refer [10] - 73:6, 151:16, 159:14, 181:19, 193:19, 271:20, 272:22, 285:22, 313:24, 332:13</p> <p>reference [8] - 39:17, 63:13, 90:18, 255:6, 256:4, 294:9, 297:19, 373:13</p> <p>referenced [1] - 23:6</p> <p>references [2] - 39:15, 164:3</p> <p>referencing [1] - 63:18</p> <p>referred [3] - 85:10, 159:20, 375:23</p> <p>referring [22] - 57:7, 58:20, 70:5, 165:11, 177:10, 177:11, 178:2, 192:19, 205:7, 205:8, 207:14, 254:23, 254:25, 255:2, 255:7, 257:13, 316:10, 318:10, 320:24, 321:5, 327:13, 376:3</p> <p>refers [1] - 319:7</p>	<p>reflect [4] - 34:15, 79:10, 262:23, 356:12</p> <p>reflected [3] - 80:15, 157:7, 339:15</p> <p>reflecting [1] - 143:19</p> <p>reflective [1] - 253:20</p> <p>reflects [13] - 29:15, 29:17, 30:8, 31:4, 31:18, 31:21, 32:10, 34:19, 143:6, 253:18, 310:17, 311:19, 311:22</p> <p>refresh [3] - 68:24, 101:5, 208:10</p> <p>refreshing [1] - 101:11</p> <p>refueling [3] - 109:13, 136:11, 136:13</p> <p>refund [2] - 15:25, 268:10</p> <p>refurbish [1] - 61:5</p> <p>reg [6] - 281:17, 300:8, 303:15, 303:18, 303:19, 303:20</p> <p>regard [2] - 67:10, 113:25</p> <p>regarding [13] - 13:23, 42:16, 79:21, 107:2, 143:11, 159:22, 181:17, 219:7, 231:5, 304:11, 331:10, 369:16, 376:20</p> <p>regardless [1] - 180:24</p> <p>regards [2] - 148:19, 318:18</p> <p>regional [13] - 40:8, 47:10, 58:17, 72:1, 102:19, 102:20, 103:1, 112:14, 120:15, 120:17, 310:8, 363:8, 363:19</p> <p>regionally [1] - 363:22</p> <p>regions [2] - 310:7, 351:12</p> <p>regular [3] - 95:5, 96:7, 220:7</p> <p>regulate [1] - 251:1</p> <p>regulated [8] - 183:10, 250:19, 251:20, 251:25, 252:2, 252:13, 280:7, 300:6</p> <p>regulation [7] - 34:8, 110:3, 121:14, 121:22, 289:5, 290:23, 299:18</p> <p>regulations [14] - 175:21, 189:8, 189:15, 189:20, 190:11, 191:15, 202:14, 202:16, 275:18, 275:20, 288:23, 304:8, 305:2, 305:4</p> <p>regulator [1] - 175:20</p> <p>regulators [2] - 50:16, 98:4</p> <p>regulatory [54] - 31:5, 32:11, 32:15, 36:21, 36:24, 58:11, 71:2, 72:18, 73:1, 75:12, 81:20, 82:9, 84:16, 85:1, 85:8, 86:8, 95:9, 95:14, 104:21, 120:14, 122:18,</p>	<p>123:10, 176:4, 189:6, 189:11, 189:19, 190:16, 198:4, 199:6, 202:9, 202:12, 202:24, 267:20, 269:8, 270:5, 270:13, 280:8, 285:9, 285:13, 285:19, 285:24, 286:25, 287:4, 287:7, 291:15, 300:2, 303:11, 303:12, 307:25, 329:6, 355:20, 371:16, 371:19</p> <p>Regulatory [8] - 175:5, 175:21, 183:10, 190:3, 199:11, 199:22, 201:8, 345:15</p> <p>rehearing [1] - 27:12</p> <p>Reinbold [1] - 362:24</p> <p>reject [1] - 324:3</p> <p>rejected [5] - 31:8, 35:19, 312:14, 321:10, 321:11</p> <p>relate [3] - 43:4, 283:6, 286:15</p> <p>related [22] - 70:21, 94:4, 142:2, 142:19, 160:15, 161:20, 167:18, 192:10, 210:7, 217:10, 217:16, 221:24, 234:14, 250:24, 281:6, 286:24, 309:17, 336:18, 336:21, 336:22, 337:1, 337:10</p> <p>relates [4] - 94:17, 142:6, 149:13, 289:6</p> <p>relating [2] - 147:7, 236:12</p> <p>relative [5] - 70:2, 83:15, 111:20, 261:14, 323:6</p> <p>relevant [4] - 24:9, 184:13, 286:11, 317:11</p> <p>reliability [29] - 21:8, 47:13, 49:16, 58:16, 58:17, 64:11, 72:1, 81:18, 103:1, 103:2, 158:11, 158:13, 158:17, 165:9, 170:9, 192:1, 192:2, 212:11, 241:20, 257:23, 311:24, 316:1, 334:15, 335:3, 335:20, 335:25, 336:5, 336:10, 355:6</p> <p>Reliability [1] - 158:20</p> <p>reliability-based [1] - 158:17</p> <p>reliable [23] - 28:25, 29:7, 40:19, 41:1, 51:1, 64:7, 80:7, 101:14, 117:21, 118:2, 156:25, 157:22, 158:25, 174:17, 175:2, 191:22, 210:9, 210:11, 309:10, 309:17, 309:20, 315:10, 336:25</p> <p>reliably [2] - 47:12, 377:8</p> <p>relied [3] - 29:12, 267:17, 271:9</p> <p>relook [1] - 183:2</p>	<p>rely [3] - 109:17, 111:6, 335:13</p> <p>remaining [8] - 113:6, 140:6, 176:14, 268:20, 274:13, 274:15, 276:25, 293:7</p> <p>remains [2] - 42:10, 303:20</p> <p>remarks [1] - 182:3</p> <p>remediating [1] - 32:14</p> <p>remedy [1] - 206:15</p> <p>remember [10] - 28:4, 204:3, 302:5, 304:9, 342:5, 342:7, 345:13, 357:20, 359:10, 370:22</p> <p>remind [2] - 20:2, 306:7</p> <p>reminder [1] - 370:25</p> <p>removal [58] - 32:10, 32:23, 33:8, 33:10, 33:12, 33:21, 33:22, 34:2, 267:15, 267:23, 268:1, 268:18, 269:2, 269:12, 270:10, 270:23, 270:24, 270:25, 271:3, 271:6, 271:7, 274:10, 274:23, 275:3, 275:8, 275:10, 276:1, 276:5, 276:10, 277:13, 277:18, 277:20, 279:8, 279:9, 279:22, 279:23, 279:24, 280:8, 280:9, 281:3, 281:6, 283:22, 285:4, 286:5, 290:15, 291:6, 291:11, 291:14, 293:13, 293:16, 293:19, 298:17, 300:8, 301:3, 303:7, 304:9, 304:12</p> <p>remove [14] - 32:20, 32:22, 157:13, 269:20, 269:23, 270:3, 275:12, 275:16, 280:4, 284:2, 289:7, 289:15, 289:23, 290:18</p> <p>removed [3] - 175:5, 293:20, 293:24</p> <p>removing [2] - 278:14, 299:19</p> <p>renewable [14] - 57:4, 57:11, 117:12, 117:15, 117:17, 118:7, 124:10, 361:14, 361:19, 369:23, 370:4, 371:4, 371:9, 371:12</p> <p>renewables [2] - 362:5, 370:18</p> <p>renewals [2] - 81:4, 177:9</p> <p>reopening [1] - 27:12</p> <p>repair [4] - 61:15, 61:20, 114:25, 157:19</p> <p>repairs [4] - 63:6, 63:13, 63:16, 63:17</p> <p>repeat [4] - 37:16, 87:8, 316:17, 335:23</p> <p>repeated [2] - 45:18, 342:6</p> <p>repeatedly [1] - 31:7</p>
---	--	---	--

<p>rephrase [2] - 232:7, 363:18 rephrasing [1] - 184:8 replace [8] - 57:9, 159:25, 160:2, 160:17, 160:23, 178:13, 178:24, 277:9 replaced [3] - 66:21, 66:22, 178:11 replacement [3] - 160:13, 160:18, 162:8 Replacement [1] - 12:7 replacing [3] - 57:2, 178:15, 277:10 report [16] - 12:12, 65:11, 68:9, 68:16, 68:20, 68:21, 78:12, 159:24, 270:19, 280:3, 281:8, 283:21, 287:3, 287:25, 288:3, 293:3 reported [5] - 270:15, 270:18, 281:12, 281:13, 283:10 reporter [8] - 20:3, 27:2, 27:5, 28:6, 47:22, 140:2, 141:11, 208:10 reporting [13] - 32:11, 32:15, 65:15, 269:6, 279:8, 279:9, 280:12, 280:18, 280:21, 283:10, 283:18, 290:25, 298:19 reports [8] - 68:11, 78:9, 78:12, 78:15, 78:22, 157:17, 270:17 repositories [1] - 200:13 represent [3] - 148:11, 153:9, 153:10 representation [2] - 153:13, 293:19 representative [3] - 35:14, 146:18, 228:23 representatives [1] - 22:5 represented [1] - 280:16 represents [1] - 147:23 request [39] - 15:20, 15:21, 27:11, 28:24, 36:12, 36:18, 36:20, 40:10, 40:13, 40:16, 40:17, 41:7, 41:8, 43:5, 43:12, 52:12, 67:16, 71:9, 76:20, 79:7, 79:8, 79:12, 79:13, 80:23, 90:5, 112:24, 112:25, 142:6, 142:11, 142:12, 165:23, 175:6, 226:8, 227:23, 228:2, 262:19, 282:2, 286:10 Request [4] - 11:15, 12:8, 12:14, 12:15 requested [9] - 16:4, 75:8, 79:9, 92:3, 92:6, 125:21, 228:8, 240:19, 286:12 requesting [4] - 125:8, 261:19, 316:6, 365:23</p>	<p>requests [3] - 36:14, 41:22, 285:18 require [4] - 64:7, 98:5, 160:19, 294:24 required [14] - 15:25, 34:24, 37:15, 136:22, 178:10, 206:16, 259:8, 266:5, 270:18, 280:3, 280:21, 286:15, 290:14, 291:5 requirement [20] - 30:21, 35:6, 40:14, 44:7, 75:5, 79:12, 108:21, 112:11, 112:16, 188:16, 257:10, 258:24, 267:19, 270:3, 284:14, 286:14, 289:7, 308:11, 362:15, 375:10 requirements [20] - 52:9, 81:19, 81:20, 82:9, 163:23, 176:4, 180:5, 202:10, 202:11, 202:12, 202:13, 269:6, 269:8, 275:23, 277:25, 278:1, 305:4, 311:8, 370:4 research [5] - 93:1, 321:13, 322:19, 332:4, 383:23 researched [1] - 377:23 resent [1] - 344:4 reserve [16] - 268:11, 268:12, 287:17, 287:18, 296:6, 302:19, 302:20, 302:24, 331:2, 334:14, 335:9, 335:10, 335:15, 335:18, 336:1, 355:14 reshaping [1] - 175:25 residential [1] - 15:16 resolved [1] - 322:12 resource [22] - 42:22, 80:24, 80:25, 95:4, 95:22, 96:4, 96:6, 96:23, 97:1, 98:12, 99:21, 106:24, 111:24, 112:10, 118:6, 121:20, 137:1, 137:13, 137:14, 162:7, 243:8, 345:2 resources [14] - 36:13, 104:19, 115:13, 121:8, 137:23, 139:2, 176:8, 184:4, 191:21, 201:16, 211:17, 344:21, 344:22 Resources [4] - 152:8, 152:12, 152:13, 251:12 respect [10] - 32:5, 34:20, 42:20, 54:10, 69:6, 79:1, 94:3, 227:23, 236:23, 320:14 respectful [1] - 100:18 respectfully [1] - 286:9 respective [2] - 313:5, 318:15 respond [12] - 28:20, 49:8, 79:23, 79:24, 92:11, 217:5,</p>	<p>233:4, 233:10, 237:19, 240:21, 248:1, 271:6 responding [1] - 176:6 responds [1] - 268:5 response [10] - 27:24, 51:8, 67:15, 67:16, 92:13, 175:22, 282:3, 286:8, 286:19, 373:22 Response [4] - 12:8, 12:14, 12:15, 13:23 responses [3] - 28:3, 254:8, 294:14 responsibility [6] - 27:15, 30:12, 34:1, 343:10, 347:25, 359:20 responsible [1] - 276:16 responsive [1] - 77:12 rest [6] - 140:7, 188:8, 261:12, 270:20, 272:9, 368:24 restate [5] - 170:15, 222:25, 232:7, 237:12, 246:9 restoration [1] - 158:6 restrictive [1] - 277:17 restructure [1] - 239:5 restructuring [1] - 114:5 result [19] - 24:6, 30:11, 44:16, 54:7, 80:15, 88:12, 268:16, 274:8, 274:9, 274:22, 308:11, 308:17, 309:22, 311:4, 343:9, 353:22, 357:7, 359:14, 372:19 results [17] - 78:8, 118:9, 168:12, 240:14, 258:17, 267:15, 268:22, 311:1, 312:9, 323:3, 323:8, 347:14, 352:16, 360:1, 360:4, 360:8, 374:23 resume [1] - 84:1 retail [7] - 69:14, 69:15, 69:25, 70:2, 70:21, 166:1, 308:23 retain [10] - 51:18, 59:11, 116:16, 180:22, 181:1, 210:8, 210:16, 212:19, 225:6, 248:4 retaining [7] - 176:17, 176:20, 188:6, 193:25, 220:13, 221:11, 261:10 retention [14] - 176:10, 181:17, 182:22, 188:21, 210:6, 213:1, 213:4, 213:6, 220:9, 220:14, 221:2, 221:7, 221:15, 221:22 retire [3] - 128:5, 299:22, 303:3 retired [10] - 32:20, 33:1, 33:23, 49:7, 269:17, 269:20, 269:21, 302:23,</p>	<p>302:25 retirees [1] - 128:19 retirement [21] - 34:4, 186:18, 227:15, 243:24, 267:23, 269:3, 270:10, 270:11, 283:8, 284:12, 284:21, 286:15, 298:2, 299:7, 299:23, 301:16, 302:5, 302:11, 302:17, 303:2, 304:12 retirements [1] - 182:14 retrain [2] - 51:18, 253:24 return [25] - 13:21, 23:19, 23:23, 24:2, 40:16, 43:2, 48:17, 48:18, 84:21, 125:3, 125:5, 125:13, 125:15, 125:18, 125:20, 127:2, 127:15, 127:16, 127:21, 144:3, 144:7, 144:12, 160:25, 233:15, 234:19 returned [1] - 130:9 returns [3] - 18:24, 34:12, 367:15 reveal [1] - 328:14 Revenue [2] - 9:5, 9:10 revenue [23] - 15:12, 30:21, 40:14, 52:9, 69:25, 75:4, 79:11, 83:3, 108:21, 112:11, 112:16, 127:13, 132:1, 163:22, 166:2, 188:16, 267:19, 286:14, 308:11, 311:8, 362:14, 375:10, 375:17 revenues [12] - 34:22, 34:23, 35:5, 35:7, 35:10, 79:25, 80:9, 131:16, 131:24, 171:20, 171:23, 171:25 reverse [3] - 41:25, 276:13, 328:5 review [21] - 43:19, 65:3, 71:2, 82:4, 95:14, 97:20, 107:12, 114:5, 157:7, 216:13, 216:15, 231:6, 231:9, 231:19, 231:20, 232:12, 232:14, 232:16, 232:25, 233:21, 236:21 Review [1] - 12:6 reviewed [5] - 65:14, 68:1, 82:11, 91:6, 148:8 reviewing [1] - 30:7 reviews [1] - 166:4 revise [2] - 79:7, 79:9 Revised [1] - 11:23 revised [3] - 112:24, 125:21, 329:1 revisit [1] - 340:13 rewards [9] - 149:6, 217:24, 217:25, 225:25, 243:17, 244:1, 244:3, 244:12, 244:19</p>
---	--	---	---

<p>RICHARD [2] - 2:10, 7:15 Richard [4] - 11:25, 12:3, 12:21, 264:18 Rick [1] - 16:17 rid [1] - 299:24 rider [14] - 41:20, 43:7, 43:10, 43:14, 43:21, 44:23, 53:3, 53:4, 53:21, 104:1, 150:21, 151:8, 151:9, 167:2 right-hand [2] - 69:10, 69:13 risk [8] - 81:24, 81:25, 109:25, 110:7, 122:5, 199:5, 356:20, 362:2 risks [5] - 34:13, 81:18, 81:21, 121:13, 356:17 River [1] - 314:25 road [3] - 129:1, 328:15, 344:24 robust [3] - 58:18, 97:13, 185:4 ROE [12] - 34:9, 34:10, 34:17, 48:4, 48:7, 48:9, 48:13, 75:7, 79:9, 79:11, 126:3, 144:5 role [3] - 110:10, 198:16, 249:11 rolling [1] - 82:21 room [10] - 15:6, 37:8, 139:15, 159:13, 159:21, 205:24, 206:3, 206:4, 232:15, 383:22 root [1] - 62:9 rotor [1] - 158:4 rough [2] - 111:11, 129:20 roughly [5] - 111:12, 132:10, 162:9, 180:12, 327:10 round [2] - 174:20, 272:3 round-the [1] - 174:20 roundabout [1] - 76:22 RTO [2] - 364:1, 364:8 RTOs [2] - 363:24, 364:12 rule [5] - 190:16, 190:19, 191:9, 279:19, 300:2 rules [12] - 200:1, 275:12, 277:20, 279:10, 279:12, 279:13, 288:22, 289:11, 300:1, 300:2, 364:3, 369:20 run [18] - 24:14, 50:13, 51:19, 71:1, 97:6, 98:7, 106:19, 109:12, 127:12, 133:10, 135:12, 135:13, 187:16, 191:17, 197:18, 286:2, 362:2, 369:9 running [12] - 94:23, 94:25, 105:12, 107:23, 137:5, 137:24, 178:22, 178:23, 178:25, 191:10, 191:14, 265:25</p>	<p>runs [3] - 55:17, 82:3, 135:15 rush [1] - 28:5 RYAN [1] - 2:15 Ryan [9] - 17:1, 17:4, 19:24, 65:7, 84:6, 86:21, 144:18, 321:3, 326:13</p> <p style="text-align: center;">S</p> <p>SACCO [60] - 2:21, 17:14, 86:17, 87:6, 87:10, 88:2, 91:15, 91:20, 91:23, 92:8, 92:10, 92:19, 93:2, 93:6, 94:2, 94:6, 94:10, 94:16, 99:23, 100:8, 150:5, 154:21, 161:10, 163:5, 169:5, 171:14, 172:4, 188:2, 188:23, 208:1, 231:17, 232:8, 232:20, 233:7, 233:9, 236:3, 236:7, 243:1, 261:7, 261:21, 264:7, 288:9, 294:10, 305:13, 337:15, 337:18, 338:15, 339:3, 340:5, 340:12, 342:19, 343:15, 344:2, 344:6, 344:9, 348:9, 378:9, 378:11, 380:1, 383:18 Sacco [48] - 3:6, 3:12, 3:14, 3:17, 4:4, 4:7, 4:16, 4:19, 5:4, 5:8, 5:16, 5:20, 5:24, 6:4, 6:8, 6:14, 6:22, 7:4, 7:7, 7:11, 7:14, 7:17, 7:20, 8:4, 8:9, 17:15, 24:22, 86:16, 87:5, 87:24, 94:15, 100:11, 140:5, 150:3, 154:20, 161:8, 171:12, 187:24, 207:25, 231:15, 232:6, 257:7, 261:5, 288:8, 305:11, 337:14, 342:3, 378:8 safe [15] - 28:24, 40:18, 51:1, 64:6, 118:2, 156:25, 157:22, 158:25, 175:2, 175:18, 200:16, 200:21, 210:11, 276:19, 277:6 safely [2] - 82:8, 176:22 safety [18] - 64:11, 81:18, 147:8, 156:24, 175:18, 175:25, 176:2, 176:7, 187:19, 189:14, 189:18, 189:21, 198:8, 202:10, 205:21, 212:11, 241:20, 257:23 sake [1] - 113:11 salaries [9] - 222:16, 225:12, 235:12, 235:20, 236:25, 239:9, 239:17, 241:2, 251:20 salary [27] - 13:19, 210:19,</p>	<p>211:17, 214:18, 215:1, 220:1, 223:12, 223:14, 223:20, 223:22, 223:24, 225:14, 225:19, 236:14, 236:22, 237:4, 237:15, 244:9, 247:4, 248:7, 248:17, 249:13, 251:11, 251:25, 252:1, 260:2, 260:23 sales [7] - 13:15, 34:22, 69:14, 69:15, 69:25, 70:2, 70:22 salient [2] - 26:19, 317:9 salvage [10] - 274:10, 274:19, 274:22, 275:2, 275:7, 275:8, 275:9, 280:25, 293:17 sample [1] - 352:25 San [2] - 194:15, 197:10 SARA [1] - 8:7 Sara [3] - 12:5, 12:24, 17:6 sat [1] - 168:24 satisfaction [2] - 216:23, 216:25 satisfy [3] - 122:8, 122:9, 325:14 save [6] - 50:7, 120:4, 229:20, 229:21, 229:22, 366:2 saved [1] - 222:6 saves [2] - 229:7, 229:11 saving [1] - 59:22 savings [14] - 114:7, 114:13, 222:3, 226:2, 226:10, 226:14, 228:10, 230:4, 230:12, 230:16, 238:20, 238:23, 240:15, 298:20 Savings [1] - 13:10 saw [6] - 55:19, 56:9, 76:13, 99:16, 112:19, 383:21 scenario [3] - 153:17, 206:13, 382:22 scenarios [5] - 187:17, 204:17, 204:19, 206:10, 207:6 schedule [2] - 161:3, 274:1 Schedule [11] - 33:6, 148:21, 272:17, 280:24, 323:12, 326:16, 331:9, 332:2, 373:13, 373:20, 379:10 scheduled [2] - 15:8, 26:21 Schedules [2] - 9:5, 9:5 schedules [2] - 24:5, 335:6 schools [6] - 183:23, 183:24, 184:23, 195:11, 195:21, 196:20 science [1] - 196:22 scorecard [8] - 215:17, 215:18, 217:14, 217:16, 233:25, 234:6, 235:4,</p>	<p>238:2 scorecards [2] - 233:25, 257:24 scores [3] - 217:5, 218:22, 218:23 Scott [11] - 10:3, 11:3, 42:9, 73:7, 73:24, 306:1, 306:16, 307:24, 348:16, 360:18, 381:25 SCOTT [2] - 4:13, 307:10 scrap [2] - 277:3, 278:18 scratchy [1] - 188:3 screening [1] - 82:2 season [4] - 22:7, 309:19, 309:23, 378:22 seasons [1] - 379:2 SEC [6] - 270:19, 280:18, 281:9, 283:10, 287:3, 291:13 second [23] - 39:22, 41:16, 47:18, 69:7, 117:21, 146:15, 149:1, 152:5, 157:23, 194:15, 201:18, 244:19, 297:22, 303:6, 311:1, 315:11, 320:25, 324:18, 331:25, 344:5, 355:4, 355:17 secondly [1] - 160:15 seconds [2] - 26:18, 382:3 secret [3] - 21:18, 21:22, 174:2 section [1] - 347:22 sectionalize [1] - 114:21 secure [5] - 56:14, 90:8, 109:16, 110:24, 114:12 secured [1] - 62:19 security [9] - 201:1, 201:3, 201:5, 201:7, 201:9, 201:15, 206:10, 206:24, 207:18 see [79] - 18:1, 18:20, 22:18, 28:2, 62:20, 70:8, 82:21, 116:17, 124:22, 125:24, 126:8, 147:24, 148:5, 151:7, 152:6, 162:11, 164:23, 165:1, 165:6, 165:10, 165:17, 168:7, 180:3, 180:13, 180:20, 185:19, 186:8, 190:6, 190:7, 192:12, 196:1, 198:12, 198:14, 199:17, 200:23, 205:19, 209:7, 223:14, 224:5, 225:20, 226:10, 227:22, 229:8, 229:10, 230:10, 230:18, 241:1, 242:6, 247:12, 248:16, 255:13, 262:22, 277:3, 291:4, 291:15, 292:6, 294:6, 295:3, 304:19, 317:17, 327:19,</p>
--	---	---	---

<p>327:22, 330:24, 331:3, 333:16, 338:5, 338:11, 339:21, 339:22, 345:3, 350:15, 352:4, 352:20, 353:17, 353:20, 356:11, 361:16, 364:1, 373:17</p> <p>seeing [12] - 106:4, 163:24, 164:9, 172:7, 187:10, 223:23, 224:2, 241:23, 247:10, 275:6, 285:8, 285:10</p> <p>seek [3] - 48:18, 62:21, 152:23</p> <p>seeking [5] - 40:23, 112:12, 146:5, 193:18, 211:24</p> <p>seeks [1] - 40:13</p> <p>segment [2] - 72:6, 310:7</p> <p>segmented [1] - 160:11</p> <p>segmenting [1] - 167:23</p> <p>segments [6] - 72:3, 161:17, 162:6, 167:21, 310:5, 364:25</p> <p>select [1] - 234:4</p> <p>selecting [1] - 308:22</p> <p>selection [1] - 320:3</p> <p>self [3] - 138:4, 138:18, 139:6</p> <p>self-fulfilling [3] - 138:4, 138:18, 139:6</p> <p>sell [1] - 137:20</p> <p>semiannual [1] - 78:9</p> <p>send [2] - 114:25, 301:17</p> <p>sends [2] - 119:8, 119:17</p> <p>Senior [1] - 174:12</p> <p>senior [2] - 119:15, 245:17</p> <p>sense [9] - 86:1, 95:11, 139:8, 275:11, 324:17, 346:21, 350:8, 363:16, 369:20</p> <p>sent [1] - 363:1</p> <p>sentence [4] - 149:1, 286:8, 286:19, 328:24</p> <p>separate [12] - 36:15, 43:15, 53:6, 53:12, 66:6, 101:20, 280:20, 287:9, 287:17, 291:1, 293:4</p> <p>separated [2] - 291:2, 291:4</p> <p>separately [2] - 174:2, 234:13</p> <p>separation [1] - 228:12</p> <p>September [4] - 61:19, 158:10, 179:13, 179:20</p> <p>series [4] - 93:25, 345:14, 345:16, 370:3</p> <p>serve [27] - 48:8, 49:14, 50:4, 50:25, 52:11, 56:23, 57:12, 76:2, 77:6, 84:19, 98:15, 104:17, 105:15, 106:18, 107:4, 107:13, 110:24, 112:7, 115:8, 121:9,</p>	<p>122:24, 158:9, 211:21, 365:3, 365:6, 376:7</p> <p>served [6] - 121:16, 122:10, 176:19, 310:7, 318:7, 352:4</p> <p>serves [8] - 31:23, 47:7, 55:14, 57:25, 60:21, 319:8, 376:5, 376:13</p> <p>SERVICE [2] - 1:3, 11:17</p> <p>service [50] - 15:11, 15:14, 15:24, 23:17, 23:20, 23:24, 24:3, 28:25, 32:18, 40:19, 41:1, 43:1, 51:1, 51:15, 52:16, 64:1, 64:3, 64:6, 64:8, 72:22, 75:23, 82:7, 101:14, 114:24, 115:3, 157:1, 158:8, 159:1, 160:23, 160:25, 163:22, 164:1, 175:8, 175:15, 177:24, 177:25, 178:23, 179:8, 210:10, 210:12, 241:17, 250:25, 268:17, 270:1, 308:16, 309:10, 309:17, 309:21, 315:10, 336:25</p> <p>Service [18] - 2:16, 2:22, 13:14, 15:7, 16:3, 17:5, 17:7, 18:7, 24:18, 24:23, 52:22, 52:23, 74:12, 114:9, 114:10, 147:14, 282:1, 332:4</p> <p>Services [2] - 267:10, 308:1</p> <p>services [5] - 114:3, 115:6, 133:11, 157:22, 251:9</p> <p>serving [2] - 107:9, 137:16</p> <p>sessions [3] - 20:4, 22:13, 195:25</p> <p>set [33] - 26:23, 29:15, 29:22, 36:22, 80:16, 85:18, 85:19, 85:21, 85:22, 97:14, 97:16, 103:20, 124:20, 147:23, 149:14, 214:13, 215:16, 223:25, 224:21, 234:3, 242:24, 249:3, 287:23, 288:2, 289:12, 294:22, 296:5, 301:21, 301:23, 302:6, 339:7, 353:19, 369:25</p> <p>sets [3] - 124:25, 176:21, 185:17</p> <p>setting [8] - 48:9, 123:16, 199:11, 215:13, 221:4, 223:22, 287:12, 308:19</p> <p>settle [1] - 284:1</p> <p>settlement [5] - 32:8, 75:20, 158:15, 270:7, 383:4</p> <p>setup [2] - 201:3, 252:14</p> <p>seven [4] - 25:25, 140:11, 196:2, 341:5</p> <p>Seventh [1] - 2:12</p>	<p>several [20] - 36:10, 39:11, 43:9, 57:21, 81:5, 82:3, 88:18, 95:13, 97:18, 130:11, 131:22, 136:14, 158:16, 160:4, 186:17, 203:15, 216:6, 274:3, 375:24, 379:15</p> <p>shakes [1] - 292:6</p> <p>shaking [2] - 27:20, 93:23</p> <p>shall [5] - 155:13, 172:24, 209:1, 239:8, 266:12</p> <p>shape [1] - 199:14</p> <p>share [11] - 76:11, 76:15, 76:18, 77:21, 115:5, 121:8, 149:4, 149:8, 149:13, 257:9, 258:24</p> <p>shared [1] - 71:19</p> <p>shareholder [3] - 126:12, 126:14, 258:9</p> <p>Shareholders [3] - 153:1, 153:2, 153:5</p> <p>shareholders [9] - 126:24, 127:1, 153:9, 257:12, 257:17, 281:9, 320:18, 356:3, 357:3</p> <p>SHARON [2] - 4:2, 209:14</p> <p>Sharon [12] - 9:20, 9:21, 10:23, 35:23, 149:24, 208:6, 208:15, 208:17, 210:1, 243:8, 249:25, 263:24</p> <p>sharp [1] - 32:13</p> <p>shed [1] - 229:5</p> <p>sheet [4] - 296:21, 297:4, 299:11, 299:12</p> <p>Sheldon [1] - 305:21</p> <p>SHELDON [1] - 306:10</p> <p>Sherburne [1] - 60:23</p> <p>Sherco [11] - 60:17, 60:23, 60:24, 61:21, 63:6, 111:14, 142:19, 157:15, 157:21, 157:25, 354:13</p> <p>shift [4] - 33:25, 135:24, 137:7, 186:8</p> <p>shining [1] - 136:2</p> <p>ship [1] - 136:7</p> <p>shock [1] - 383:22</p> <p>shoot [1] - 27:6</p> <p>shooting [1] - 25:6</p> <p>shop [1] - 278:12</p> <p>short [8] - 60:23, 151:5, 160:12, 215:10, 243:19, 253:10, 320:13, 344:13</p> <p>short-term [2] - 215:10, 243:19</p> <p>shortage [3] - 176:15, 253:12, 360:9</p> <p>shortages [1] - 367:11</p> <p>shorter [2] - 335:7, 379:2</p> <p>shorthand [2] - 90:13, 91:18</p>	<p>shorting [1] - 371:16</p> <p>show [20] - 15:4, 24:17, 38:2, 46:18, 50:12, 119:16, 133:17, 192:5, 197:1, 222:6, 222:22, 226:2, 253:8, 271:24, 291:13, 326:5, 340:19, 354:2, 373:20, 374:21</p> <p>showed [2] - 112:22, 192:9</p> <p>showing [4] - 253:18, 283:14, 326:6, 326:7</p> <p>shown [2] - 142:14, 273:10</p> <p>shows [8] - 22:24, 69:14, 69:18, 70:19, 98:19, 131:10, 253:25, 257:18</p> <p>shrink [3] - 182:13, 184:2, 196:25</p> <p>shrinking [1] - 182:3</p> <p>shrunk [3] - 130:24, 182:5, 184:4</p> <p>shut [6] - 105:14, 109:10, 109:13, 135:22, 194:12, 197:14</p> <p>side [23] - 19:23, 80:24, 80:25, 81:16, 81:17, 83:3, 93:8, 184:19, 186:5, 188:12, 191:3, 254:16, 290:4, 291:15, 299:4, 299:13, 299:24, 381:5, 381:6, 383:22</p> <p>sidebar [1] - 295:5</p> <p>sided [2] - 69:11, 145:5</p> <p>sides [2] - 89:18, 292:4</p> <p>side [1] - 45:25</p> <p>sign [2] - 119:17, 341:24</p> <p>signal [2] - 27:2, 119:9</p> <p>significance [3] - 310:2, 310:16, 376:20</p> <p>significant [25] - 42:7, 44:13, 45:21, 46:10, 46:17, 54:13, 61:6, 68:24, 76:14, 102:23, 105:17, 108:21, 116:2, 136:22, 157:6, 174:15, 176:11, 212:14, 213:7, 247:19, 311:7, 311:14, 352:15</p> <p>significantly [4] - 29:10, 36:1, 76:15, 102:20</p> <p>similar [21] - 34:13, 49:8, 136:5, 136:8, 165:6, 165:15, 185:14, 189:23, 210:24, 215:24, 240:24, 241:8, 242:11, 279:17, 316:6, 336:15, 341:13, 353:2, 361:13, 369:12, 369:13</p> <p>similarities [1] - 187:4</p> <p>similarly [5] - 34:10, 35:22, 43:22, 212:18, 255:14</p> <p>similarly-situated [1] -</p>
--	--	---	--

<p>255:14 simple [15] - 89:19, 106:12, 135:15, 242:2, 242:3, 243:12, 247:7, 276:24, 284:17, 295:22, 348:3, 348:24, 357:13, 373:24, 381:10 simpler [1] - 301:22 simply [13] - 32:4, 160:5, 162:19, 178:17, 179:2, 183:2, 324:1, 326:4, 344:13, 344:24, 346:13, 376:25, 381:21 simulation [2] - 204:15, 204:18 simulators [1] - 187:18 single [9] - 33:10, 75:1, 183:16, 185:5, 287:21, 309:19, 319:12, 328:7, 353:9 sit [1] - 123:10 site [4] - 116:16, 145:3, 253:7, 253:18 sites [1] - 183:12 siting [1] - 354:16 sitting [4] - 17:6, 95:1, 151:4, 298:19 situated [1] - 255:14 situation [11] - 72:15, 161:2, 190:2, 190:25, 205:15, 205:25, 206:6, 206:15, 219:3, 316:7, 367:5 situations [6] - 64:11, 137:18, 187:10, 207:2, 207:8, 207:10 six [7] - 66:4, 66:18, 140:11, 185:9, 195:1, 250:5, 305:21 six-month [1] - 185:9 six-year [1] - 195:1 sixth [2] - 358:15, 359:17 sixths [2] - 358:16, 359:21 size [9] - 49:5, 130:25, 131:17, 132:8, 178:17, 240:24, 241:8, 253:11, 255:24 sized [2] - 351:20, 365:5 Skabo [1] - 152:6 skill [2] - 176:21, 185:17 skilled [7] - 51:14, 51:18, 176:15, 210:8, 212:6, 212:24, 220:11 skills [1] - 195:22 skip [3] - 265:16, 268:4, 270:20 skipping [1] - 297:21 slice [3] - 106:18, 107:15, 334:2 slices [1] - 320:10 slight [1] - 165:7</p>	<p>slightly [3] - 157:3, 245:16, 299:5 slippage [1] - 359:2 slots [1] - 114:13 slow [2] - 20:2, 47:19 slowly [1] - 56:7 small [7] - 53:7, 117:1, 217:15, 253:13, 275:22, 359:2 smaller [6] - 129:25, 235:24, 291:8, 299:5, 311:4, 368:19 smart [1] - 114:19 smooth [2] - 56:18, 88:5 smoothing [6] - 41:15, 54:5, 88:7, 88:18, 89:10, 256:17 smoothly [1] - 24:15 snapshot [1] - 299:2 society [1] - 205:23 software [2] - 272:10, 272:11 solar [2] - 44:5, 136:3 solely [8] - 211:16, 219:11, 227:18, 270:11, 335:14, 346:4, 354:18, 355:5 solemnly [4] - 155:12, 172:23, 208:25, 266:11 solid [1] - 362:16 solution [1] - 21:10 solve [1] - 372:5 someone [12] - 58:1, 77:18, 129:16, 166:7, 185:11, 196:12, 251:23, 252:12, 263:8, 327:5, 344:14, 345:19 someplace [1] - 188:14 sometimes [7] - 20:22, 21:21, 27:3, 276:20, 277:2, 278:19, 345:10 somewhat [3] - 60:19, 131:15, 227:7 somewhere [6] - 151:15, 255:20, 319:3, 322:1, 336:7, 340:19 sooner [1] - 205:6 Sooner [1] - 153:17 sophisticated [2] - 348:3, 354:25 sorry [37] - 57:19, 60:14, 63:16, 68:10, 70:14, 70:19, 75:21, 148:18, 174:1, 181:6, 192:20, 193:5, 193:10, 193:19, 214:9, 219:19, 231:10, 231:24, 236:1, 237:11, 246:9, 282:10, 290:2, 290:7, 297:9, 319:15, 323:14, 326:11, 326:22, 327:15, 332:1, 335:23, 347:21, 350:20, 366:1, 370:9, 372:24</p>	<p>sort [33] - 50:20, 76:17, 76:24, 77:16, 78:14, 82:20, 85:5, 85:7, 98:20, 98:25, 101:6, 101:8, 102:6, 102:9, 102:11, 111:20, 126:25, 131:20, 135:16, 138:2, 138:4, 139:6, 196:7, 216:14, 217:1, 217:21, 218:16, 222:5, 227:24, 344:4, 348:6, 375:8 sorts [3] - 137:18, 355:11, 372:15 sought [1] - 130:14 sound [3] - 34:5, 84:24, 229:4 sounds [7] - 56:2, 193:23, 227:6, 228:9, 228:16, 229:12, 339:5 source [7] - 109:24, 112:7, 135:25, 184:3, 194:13, 198:21, 345:20 sources [12] - 47:14, 56:23, 58:19, 107:22, 109:16, 110:13, 110:25, 111:5, 184:2, 184:24, 249:3, 345:12 South [20] - 2:12, 30:23, 58:13, 73:14, 122:11, 273:13, 287:20, 287:21, 318:12, 318:19, 350:3, 356:19, 358:8, 358:18, 359:19, 369:9, 369:11, 369:14, 376:4, 376:6 Southwestern [2] - 52:22, 114:10 space [5] - 59:7, 59:12, 59:14, 202:23, 254:4 speaking [9] - 78:13, 100:22, 119:9, 121:16, 132:10, 195:2, 199:15, 254:13, 323:6 speaks [2] - 216:22, 241:23 special [3] - 188:8, 188:11, 355:23 specialized [1] - 176:15 specific [41] - 31:23, 33:7, 88:24, 90:2, 95:8, 95:9, 162:2, 199:21, 201:8, 217:9, 250:24, 255:10, 255:16, 255:23, 267:13, 271:6, 275:24, 287:12, 309:18, 309:19, 310:7, 315:23, 319:5, 320:1, 328:10, 329:10, 330:1, 338:12, 339:5, 339:12, 340:24, 344:15, 344:25, 354:6, 358:9, 360:3, 371:18, 373:19, 378:17, 378:18, 378:22 specifically [14] - 68:21,</p>	<p>77:6, 86:23, 175:20, 216:19, 219:15, 242:22, 255:7, 270:6, 271:21, 287:6, 309:12, 343:4, 351:17 specifics [5] - 100:20, 224:15, 228:8, 334:24 speculation [1] - 166:14 speed [2] - 185:24, 243:9 spend [12] - 64:13, 82:16, 128:2, 162:7, 285:6, 298:12, 298:17, 298:18, 298:20, 299:25, 300:4, 300:7 spending [4] - 45:22, 81:10, 127:12, 132:9 spends [1] - 126:13 spent [5] - 102:16, 119:24, 127:7, 379:10 spike [1] - 132:2 spine [1] - 204:22 spits [1] - 378:18 splice [1] - 160:25 split [2] - 320:10, 372:3 splitting [1] - 53:19 spoken [1] - 81:1 sponsor [1] - 267:13 sponsoring [1] - 147:14 spot [1] - 218:4 spread [3] - 54:4, 76:9, 76:22 St [1] - 136:20 stability [13] - 176:19, 182:23, 186:21, 196:17, 213:9, 308:24, 352:13, 352:18, 352:19, 353:6, 356:6, 373:14, 374:23 stabilize [1] - 190:13 stable [10] - 84:25, 164:23, 165:1, 310:25, 312:9, 323:3, 323:7, 323:11, 343:14, 356:10 STAFF [2] - 2:19, 6:19 Staff [3] - 142:24, 226:7, 228:22 staff [54] - 17:1, 17:5, 17:10, 19:24, 20:15, 22:25, 25:9, 25:16, 25:24, 29:2, 29:9, 29:20, 33:4, 36:10, 36:19, 40:7, 41:4, 41:6, 41:12, 42:16, 43:3, 43:18, 44:22, 53:7, 65:17, 67:17, 88:5, 89:5, 89:13, 89:21, 91:25, 92:11, 151:21, 159:4, 162:22, 194:23, 229:1, 230:18, 267:18, 283:2, 285:18, 294:12, 308:8, 311:6, 311:17, 312:11, 313:14, 332:22, 343:3, 343:23, 344:18, 362:22, 382:18, 383:7</p>
---	---	--	---

<p>staff's [3] - 43:22, 92:13, 147:19</p> <p>staffing [3] - 116:7, 196:8, 253:16</p> <p>staffs [1] - 186:16</p> <p>stage [1] - 96:13</p> <p>stages [2] - 158:7, 180:7</p> <p>stagnant [1] - 176:3</p> <p>stakeholders [2] - 122:5, 329:6</p> <p>stakes [1] - 118:2</p> <p>stand [11] - 62:18, 64:23, 67:11, 140:25, 173:19, 305:18, 331:5, 338:23, 339:22, 341:11, 383:25</p> <p>standalone [1] - 201:11</p> <p>standard [11] - 29:16, 30:6, 34:6, 57:4, 80:1, 81:22, 245:9, 279:8, 279:19, 289:2</p> <p>standard's [1] - 170:13</p> <p>standardize [1] - 279:5</p> <p>standards [17] - 29:14, 34:10, 42:12, 44:5, 47:12, 147:8, 170:9, 170:12, 170:16, 170:17, 170:19, 176:2, 189:14, 189:17, 212:12, 342:15, 343:2</p> <p>Standards [1] - 279:5</p> <p>standpoint [2] - 189:7, 189:11</p> <p>stands [2] - 146:25, 269:3</p> <p>stark [1] - 109:7</p> <p>start [11] - 22:1, 45:15, 61:9, 81:17, 85:7, 180:13, 198:25, 223:2, 223:20, 280:22, 337:19</p> <p>started [10] - 81:5, 120:6, 120:11, 122:7, 124:6, 184:2, 213:20, 292:5, 300:21, 345:14</p> <p>starting [13] - 20:20, 54:19, 81:13, 96:10, 161:19, 186:8, 195:24, 196:1, 196:24, 197:1, 359:10, 359:11, 360:9</p> <p>startup [2] - 61:6, 61:16</p> <p>state [53] - 31:9, 36:25, 45:20, 45:24, 63:24, 66:15, 75:17, 85:9, 85:17, 85:18, 86:4, 86:9, 107:5, 114:17, 115:9, 117:11, 122:17, 122:19, 122:20, 125:23, 146:17, 180:16, 180:20, 202:12, 202:14, 202:17, 202:19, 202:23, 222:3, 225:1, 231:4, 275:21, 277:20, 277:21, 289:11, 289:14, 303:6, 308:16, 312:25, 313:16, 318:5,</p>	<p>320:21, 321:8, 323:1, 328:7, 328:13, 347:10, 361:12, 361:24, 363:5, 363:25, 375:14</p> <p>STATE [1] - 1:2</p> <p>Stage [11] - 1:17, 13:13, 15:7, 60:21, 148:14, 148:15, 203:22, 273:12, 273:20, 322:3, 362:5</p> <p>state-to-state [1] - 86:9</p> <p>statement [39] - 26:8, 26:17, 28:11, 38:16, 40:3, 45:19, 73:11, 117:9, 155:18, 156:18, 173:4, 174:8, 177:23, 189:25, 203:21, 209:5, 209:25, 223:19, 232:12, 255:3, 255:24, 265:3, 265:9, 265:12, 265:13, 267:6, 271:11, 285:2, 285:8, 300:6, 303:20, 307:4, 307:21, 307:22, 318:9, 318:11, 323:2, 328:10, 340:19</p> <p>Statement [16] - 10:19, 10:21, 10:22, 10:23, 10:24, 11:3, 11:4, 11:5, 11:7, 11:8, 11:10, 12:17, 12:18, 12:21, 12:23, 12:24</p> <p>statements [5] - 73:20, 87:18, 140:8, 270:16, 291:8</p> <p>States [7] - 1:6, 11:11, 15:10, 28:17, 40:9, 187:14, 199:9</p> <p>states [27] - 42:17, 69:13, 69:23, 75:11, 75:14, 85:17, 102:22, 122:18, 122:23, 124:5, 124:8, 148:25, 229:7, 270:7, 270:14, 274:2, 304:23, 311:13, 320:23, 334:4, 358:24, 359:4, 359:11, 360:6, 376:1, 376:13, 376:18</p> <p>static [1] - 98:18</p> <p>stating [1] - 229:11</p> <p>stations [1] - 279:7</p> <p>statistic [1] - 192:1</p> <p>statistical [1] - 353:5</p> <p>statistics [1] - 352:24</p> <p>status [4] - 157:17, 177:9, 178:1, 185:7</p> <p>statute [3] - 29:23, 34:24, 85:9</p> <p>statutes [4] - 85:17, 85:18, 288:22, 289:11</p> <p>statutory [2] - 35:6, 279:10</p> <p>stay [2] - 20:25, 104:7</p> <p>stays [2] - 275:8, 300:16</p> <p>step [8] - 19:11, 41:17, 96:19, 103:18, 151:13, 205:14, 264:17, 305:21</p>	<p>STEPHEN [2] - 3:10, 156:5</p> <p>Stephen [2] - 9:14, 10:21</p> <p>steps [9] - 61:6, 64:10, 123:16, 180:23, 180:25, 205:9, 242:12, 242:18, 336:14</p> <p>Steve [9] - 11:5, 67:2, 71:24, 110:20, 115:21, 138:22, 139:10, 155:5, 166:22</p> <p>STEVE [1] - 5:11</p> <p>Steven [6] - 10:8, 10:9, 10:10, 10:16, 10:18, 11:10</p> <p>STEVEN [1] - 6:5</p> <p>sticker [1] - 68:3</p> <p>sticking [1] - 240:8</p> <p>still [31] - 50:24, 63:8, 88:21, 92:24, 93:3, 96:21, 97:15, 100:23, 104:15, 112:2, 122:15, 125:23, 142:14, 191:20, 192:5, 224:16, 225:8, 225:21, 236:11, 240:13, 258:8, 259:10, 259:11, 289:3, 302:14, 317:10, 341:10, 355:7, 358:12, 358:17</p> <p>stipulate [1] - 265:20</p> <p>stipulated [4] - 25:21, 26:1, 209:20, 307:7</p> <p>stochastic [1] - 317:2</p> <p>Stock [1] - 283:21</p> <p>stock [5] - 153:11, 221:22, 221:24, 233:14, 241:5</p> <p>stock-related [1] - 221:24</p> <p>stockholders [1] - 153:11</p> <p>stone [1] - 85:23</p> <p>stop [12] - 21:25, 25:22, 32:14, 59:18, 111:25, 112:1, 199:19, 289:15, 295:19, 296:2, 296:9</p> <p>stops [1] - 296:7</p> <p>storage [8] - 199:17, 199:19, 200:9, 200:15, 200:20, 202:23, 202:24, 203:20</p> <p>stores [1] - 279:7</p> <p>stories [1] - 254:8</p> <p>straight [4] - 69:8, 144:11, 268:21, 274:7</p> <p>stranded [4] - 30:22, 126:23, 127:3, 359:9</p> <p>strategies [1] - 187:18</p> <p>Street [1] - 2:12</p> <p>street [3] - 59:10, 59:16, 60:5</p> <p>strength [2] - 133:9, 138:16</p> <p>strenuously [1] - 369:22</p> <p>stress [2] - 62:10, 183:19</p> <p>stretch [1] - 227:24</p> <p>stretches [1] - 109:13</p> <p>strike [1] - 63:19</p> <p>strikes [1] - 84:22</p> <p>stringent [1] - 176:5</p>	<p>strive [2] - 217:12, 222:17</p> <p>striving [1] - 258:7</p> <p>strong [4] - 76:5, 130:12, 148:13, 346:23</p> <p>strongly [2] - 130:16, 366:16</p> <p>structure [8] - 104:7, 183:3, 195:17, 224:20, 245:9, 245:10, 250:17, 251:15</p> <p>structured [6] - 103:12, 214:21, 220:6, 234:8, 234:11</p> <p>structures [3] - 13:24, 198:9, 223:23</p> <p>struggled [1] - 213:2</p> <p>struggling [1] - 359:23</p> <p>studied [1] - 193:2</p> <p>studies [9] - 58:3, 143:12, 143:14, 218:16, 218:17, 218:22, 223:24, 300:11, 300:12</p> <p>study [15] - 33:7, 67:4, 267:14, 267:16, 267:17, 271:7, 271:10, 271:25, 272:23, 273:11, 273:14, 273:19, 273:23, 281:3, 317:21</p> <p>stuff [3] - 163:17, 277:15, 362:6</p> <p>subcommittee [1] - 179:14</p> <p>Subject [2] - 286:20, 286:23</p> <p>subject [7] - 24:21, 25:11, 37:14, 91:10, 110:3, 119:18, 266:4</p> <p>subjective [3] - 238:4, 238:11, 238:17</p> <p>submit [1] - 312:5</p> <p>submitted [7] - 17:11, 24:19, 25:19, 38:11, 71:8, 181:14, 336:2</p> <p>subpar [1] - 184:9</p> <p>subpart [1] - 347:6</p> <p>subscribers [1] - 47:2</p> <p>subsequent [1] - 46:3</p> <p>substantially [1] - 375:1</p> <p>substation [1] - 116:15</p> <p>substations [1] - 71:22</p> <p>success [2] - 210:15, 212:25</p> <p>successful [1] - 194:18</p> <p>sudden [1] - 359:15</p> <p>suddenly [2] - 137:4, 196:6</p> <p>suffered [1] - 61:12</p> <p>sufficient [3] - 34:13, 318:2, 349:9</p> <p>suggest [3] - 167:6, 324:12, 351:7</p> <p>suggested [2] - 335:11, 382:12</p> <p>suggesting [1] - 346:7</p> <p>suggestion [3] - 341:4, 341:13, 372:1</p>
---	---	---	---

<p>suggestions [2] - 49:21, 231:23</p> <p>suggests [1] - 378:22</p> <p>suited [1] - 205:25</p> <p>suits [1] - 328:16</p> <p>sum [7] - 223:17, 334:17, 346:13, 346:14, 350:2, 357:20, 366:11</p> <p>summarize [1] - 26:19</p> <p>summary [4] - 44:9, 130:21, 241:9, 364:16</p> <p>Summary [2] - 9:8, 12:7</p> <p>summer [14] - 15:18, 309:22, 309:23, 310:1, 316:3, 316:5, 316:8, 350:14, 353:16, 368:23, 379:1, 379:15, 379:17, 381:16</p> <p>sun [1] - 136:2</p> <p>superior [1] - 328:8</p> <p>supersede [1] - 202:17</p> <p>supervisor [1] - 260:5</p> <p>supervisors [1] - 183:9</p> <p>Supplement [1] - 11:15</p> <p>supplemental [4] - 67:16, 270:25, 311:18, 372:9</p> <p>Supplemental [4] - 10:7, 10:9, 11:20, 12:3</p> <p>suppliers [1] - 114:6</p> <p>supplies [3] - 54:22, 121:14, 121:15</p> <p>supply [8] - 49:15, 55:3, 81:16, 82:15, 114:2, 156:21, 164:23, 381:6</p> <p>support [15] - 16:22, 18:25, 25:17, 28:24, 34:13, 40:17, 41:5, 48:15, 133:1, 147:1, 148:6, 153:7, 180:8, 242:4, 318:8</p> <p>supported [4] - 29:3, 42:14, 148:7, 153:13</p> <p>supporter [1] - 153:1</p> <p>supporting [4] - 41:3, 242:2, 285:19, 371:3</p> <p>supports [2] - 30:5, 33:8</p> <p>suppose [6] - 204:1, 358:4, 358:5, 359:12, 360:5, 366:20</p> <p>supposed [1] - 323:18</p> <p>suppression [1] - 206:19</p> <p>surfacing [1] - 294:25</p> <p>surplus [4] - 268:14, 268:15, 268:19, 274:14</p> <p>surprised [1] - 379:19</p> <p>survey [5] - 118:9, 247:11, 247:12, 249:3, 255:15</p> <p>surveying [2] - 117:13, 216:14</p> <p>surveys [18] - 117:20, 215:1, 216:21, 217:6, 217:8, 223:12, 223:13, 224:2,</p>	<p>225:8, 240:23, 242:13, 242:20, 247:4, 247:5, 249:1, 255:8, 255:22, 256:3</p> <p>suspect [2] - 363:23, 384:8</p> <p>sustainable [1] - 182:19</p> <p>swallow [1] - 108:14</p> <p>swear [4] - 155:12, 172:23, 208:25, 266:11</p> <p>swings [5] - 30:12, 343:9, 352:15, 353:25, 356:11</p> <p>swipe [1] - 116:23</p> <p>switch [4] - 13:8, 114:18, 137:8, 325:9</p> <p>switched [1] - 363:7</p> <p>switches [2] - 119:25, 169:16</p> <p>sworn [8] - 38:5, 38:22, 156:6, 173:14, 209:15, 266:21, 307:2, 307:11</p> <p>synchronized [1] - 61:18</p> <p>System [2] - 12:11, 111:1</p> <p>system [110] - 30:1, 40:18, 42:12, 45:21, 45:24, 47:7, 47:10, 47:11, 47:16, 48:13, 50:25, 52:11, 68:25, 73:13, 80:11, 81:14, 84:22, 101:5, 101:6, 101:8, 101:11, 101:17, 102:12, 102:19, 102:21, 102:25, 104:3, 111:1, 115:17, 137:12, 138:24, 139:4, 139:8, 158:15, 167:19, 167:25, 200:1, 210:10, 216:10, 248:21, 273:15, 273:16, 288:1, 296:3, 308:14, 309:11, 309:15, 309:20, 310:6, 310:8, 310:24, 311:13, 311:20, 311:25, 312:1, 313:6, 313:12, 315:13, 315:14, 315:15, 319:2, 319:3, 319:4, 319:7, 319:8, 319:10, 319:17, 323:20, 325:8, 326:6, 327:8, 327:13, 333:3, 334:24, 336:10, 345:18, 346:14, 346:16, 349:6, 349:7, 349:8, 349:22, 349:23, 350:1, 350:5, 351:24, 352:2, 352:4, 352:5, 352:10, 353:21, 354:10, 354:25, 363:4, 363:15, 364:24, 364:25, 365:3, 365:9, 365:10, 369:7, 375:23, 376:5, 376:13, 377:7, 379:14, 381:12</p> <p>systems [5] - 29:7, 40:24, 168:2, 201:10, 272:12</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">T</p> <p>table [11] - 17:6, 21:12, 118:1, 142:15, 164:15, 192:20, 192:21, 269:9, 292:17, 292:19, 334:18</p> <p>Table [7] - 163:14, 163:20, 164:3, 271:22, 273:2, 304:7, 304:16</p> <p>tables [1] - 292:11</p> <p>Tail [6] - 378:3, 382:9, 382:12, 382:13, 382:21</p> <p>talent [10] - 195:13, 215:1, 220:11, 225:6, 225:7, 248:5, 253:16, 254:9, 254:11</p> <p>talented [1] - 210:13</p> <p>talks [3] - 171:20, 220:22, 329:7</p> <p>tangible [2] - 350:25, 357:9</p> <p>tape [1] - 21:25</p> <p>target [15] - 51:3, 149:12, 189:24, 224:1, 234:15, 246:19, 247:1, 247:3, 247:9, 247:10, 247:13, 258:17, 258:18, 263:9</p> <p>targeted [4] - 52:13, 149:4, 149:8, 335:15</p> <p>Tariff [1] - 9:8</p> <p>tariff [3] - 123:17, 365:23, 365:25</p> <p>Tariffs [2] - 9:6, 9:8</p> <p>team [2] - 119:25, 263:2</p> <p>technical [3] - 115:6, 195:5, 205:8</p> <p>technically [1] - 295:18</p> <p>technicians [1] - 185:17</p> <p>technology [4] - 115:12, 121:4, 180:19, 290:16</p> <p>television [1] - 187:10</p> <p>temperatures [1] - 368:23</p> <p>temptation [1] - 28:5</p> <p>ten [7] - 28:11, 99:22, 152:2, 198:15, 208:9, 295:22, 296:2</p> <p>ten-key [1] - 295:22</p> <p>ten-minute [1] - 208:9</p> <p>tend [2] - 366:20, 369:5</p> <p>tends [1] - 225:1</p> <p>term [36] - 40:25, 41:1, 56:1, 63:17, 120:25, 121:1, 128:2, 170:13, 176:7, 184:7, 186:2, 186:12, 186:15, 186:21, 192:6, 195:24, 200:13, 200:20, 210:14, 215:10, 220:22, 220:24, 226:2, 239:11, 241:4, 243:19, 258:22, 259:11, 259:14, 278:13,</p>	<p>279:2, 279:3, 289:6, 290:8, 365:7</p> <p>terminology [1] - 243:10</p> <p>terms [23] - 44:13, 60:3, 85:25, 86:7, 101:22, 105:8, 107:6, 118:10, 121:19, 127:15, 138:25, 232:2, 244:5, 288:17, 317:11, 323:6, 327:3, 340:3, 348:24, 353:6, 356:21, 359:2, 375:17</p> <p>test [24] - 15:12, 30:14, 34:20, 34:21, 34:25, 35:4, 35:6, 35:14, 78:25, 80:1, 81:9, 82:23, 83:12, 88:11, 143:18, 143:19, 158:23, 286:14, 308:11, 311:8, 324:22, 324:23, 368:16, 375:13</p> <p>testified [8] - 38:22, 156:6, 173:14, 209:15, 251:23, 266:21, 307:11, 328:9</p> <p>testify [5] - 25:17, 74:18, 74:19, 140:19, 219:4</p> <p>testifying [1] - 28:4</p> <p>testimony [161] - 9:11, 9:12, 9:14, 9:15, 9:17, 9:18, 9:20, 9:21, 9:23, 9:24, 10:3, 10:4, 10:6, 10:7, 10:9, 10:10, 10:12, 10:13, 10:15, 10:16, 10:18, 11:18, 11:20, 11:21, 11:23, 11:24, 12:3, 12:4, 17:25, 18:21, 20:21, 25:8, 26:14, 26:20, 30:4, 31:20, 33:6, 37:13, 39:3, 39:6, 39:11, 41:14, 45:18, 54:2, 72:8, 74:2, 74:10, 75:1, 75:16, 78:3, 84:10, 112:22, 119:3, 128:14, 141:23, 141:24, 143:2, 143:3, 148:20, 151:18, 152:24, 155:12, 156:12, 156:15, 156:19, 157:12, 159:5, 161:11, 163:13, 163:14, 165:3, 165:8, 166:22, 167:12, 171:19, 172:9, 172:23, 173:22, 173:24, 174:5, 175:11, 180:16, 180:17, 180:24, 188:14, 192:11, 192:25, 193:12, 197:9, 199:16, 201:22, 208:25, 209:20, 209:22, 210:4, 212:21, 219:21, 220:4, 220:22, 221:10, 222:2, 224:25, 229:6, 231:4, 232:4, 232:10, 245:22, 251:24, 254:3, 262:6, 266:3, 266:11, 267:1, 267:12, 268:5, 268:8,</p>
--	--	--	--

<p>268:15, 269:4, 269:8, 271:4, 271:21, 272:17, 292:3, 294:15, 307:16, 308:2, 311:18, 311:21, 313:16, 313:25, 315:6, 315:18, 318:5, 320:11, 320:19, 324:1, 325:19, 326:18, 328:12, 331:10, 334:23, 337:4, 337:21, 337:24, 338:4, 339:4, 339:11, 339:15, 341:8, 344:14, 344:17, 344:18, 347:4, 348:2, 351:11, 352:13, 353:9, 355:3, 364:15, 372:10</p> <p>testing [4] - 61:16, 158:8, 200:14, 293:10</p> <p>tests [2] - 61:8, 61:10</p> <p>testy [1] - 20:21</p> <p>Texas [1] - 52:23</p> <p>THE [57] - 1:22, 2:13, 2:18, 47:24, 87:3, 92:5, 92:14, 92:25, 100:9, 134:9, 139:16, 154:25, 155:9, 155:15, 155:19, 169:21, 169:23, 172:10, 172:20, 173:1, 181:18, 184:14, 208:4, 208:22, 209:3, 227:9, 231:22, 249:19, 256:8, 263:25, 265:24, 266:14, 266:17, 290:2, 290:6, 291:19, 294:17, 297:9, 305:16, 306:23, 321:5, 326:22, 331:21, 333:13, 339:2, 342:7, 342:9, 344:8, 350:20, 370:9, 370:11, 370:14, 370:19, 370:21, 370:24, 382:1, 383:20</p> <p>the-job [1] - 195:8</p> <p>their's [1] - 263:5</p> <p>themselves [1] - 256:3</p> <p>theoretical [2] - 268:11, 379:9</p> <p>theoretically [3] - 361:9, 372:14, 379:7</p> <p>theory [1] - 354:6</p> <p>thereby [1] - 309:13</p> <p>therefore [5] - 175:10, 182:20, 182:23, 182:24, 210:21</p> <p>they've [3] - 128:5, 287:10, 287:11</p> <p>thinking [6] - 95:2, 108:7, 108:14, 229:15, 240:11, 333:8</p> <p>thinks [1] - 227:3</p> <p>third [25] - 26:23, 39:22, 146:17, 146:22, 146:24, 218:17, 223:12, 234:9,</p>	<p>242:12, 247:4, 255:7, 256:3, 296:21, 297:4, 297:23, 302:19, 311:10, 337:22, 356:6, 357:17, 358:6, 358:9, 359:13</p> <p>third-party [5] - 218:17, 223:12, 242:12, 247:4, 256:3</p> <p>thirds [1] - 358:12</p> <p>thirty [2] - 120:7, 382:3</p> <p>thirty-four [1] - 120:7</p> <p>thorough [3] - 20:8, 23:2, 40:11</p> <p>thoughts [8] - 19:18, 63:11, 63:12, 122:6, 125:3, 125:16, 168:9, 363:3</p> <p>thousand [2] - 356:25, 357:11</p> <p>thousands [1] - 227:5</p> <p>threats [1] - 187:4</p> <p>three [41] - 35:2, 60:24, 69:18, 79:19, 96:5, 99:8, 99:10, 99:11, 145:3, 145:4, 145:10, 145:11, 146:23, 164:2, 207:13, 215:15, 221:25, 233:24, 234:12, 243:14, 268:7, 287:22, 287:23, 288:1, 295:8, 295:9, 301:23, 303:2, 308:22, 312:8, 321:14, 338:12, 339:6, 340:23, 350:3, 357:12, 360:6, 368:3, 374:24, 376:14, 380:15</p> <p>three-fourths [1] - 146:23</p> <p>three-year [3] - 35:2, 79:19, 221:25</p> <p>threshold [2] - 235:5, 258:18</p> <p>threw [2] - 99:14, 345:21</p> <p>throat [1] - 188:4</p> <p>throughout [17] - 26:25, 31:22, 45:18, 50:17, 79:4, 210:10, 216:1, 216:7, 216:11, 217:7, 237:22, 246:20, 248:24, 260:17, 300:16, 311:3, 368:25</p> <p>throw [1] - 354:14</p> <p>throwing [1] - 371:25</p> <p>thumbs [3] - 147:1, 147:12</p> <p>thumbs-down [1] - 147:12</p> <p>Thursday [1] - 26:23</p> <p>tidal [1] - 187:3</p> <p>tie [7] - 22:6, 151:11, 163:3, 168:14, 236:16, 237:13, 252:17</p> <p>tied [8] - 57:23, 162:15, 215:19, 234:18, 234:21, 236:11, 257:8</p> <p>ties [1] - 149:15</p> <p>tighter [3] - 120:24, 121:25</p>	<p>Tim [3] - 174:11, 189:5, 197:9</p> <p>time-based [1] - 221:15</p> <p>timely [2] - 43:19, 305:17</p> <p>timing [2] - 81:25, 359:3</p> <p>Timothy [5] - 9:15, 9:17, 9:18, 10:22, 172:15</p> <p>TIMOTHY [2] - 3:15, 173:13</p> <p>tipping [1] - 98:7</p> <p>title [1] - 91:18</p> <p>today [54] - 18:8, 18:19, 20:13, 20:20, 21:11, 22:6, 25:1, 25:3, 25:14, 26:9, 26:22, 26:25, 28:19, 33:18, 39:6, 40:3, 40:10, 60:1, 84:10, 93:22, 95:21, 97:9, 101:14, 106:15, 108:15, 109:22, 110:6, 119:4, 140:4, 140:7, 140:10, 140:14, 140:18, 140:19, 141:20, 151:16, 159:3, 173:19, 175:8, 176:24, 177:19, 209:22, 231:21, 236:24, 251:5, 254:14, 262:6, 275:15, 283:24, 298:9, 298:23, 364:13, 364:15, 383:5</p> <p>today's [4] - 18:15, 32:17, 101:16, 302:15</p> <p>together [21] - 54:24, 55:4, 80:8, 83:3, 83:12, 95:8, 96:21, 100:24, 102:22, 119:24, 127:14, 142:8, 227:4, 227:11, 227:13, 227:18, 228:18, 233:24, 303:7, 303:9, 322:5</p> <p>tolerance [1] - 117:15</p> <p>tomorrow [8] - 26:22, 101:14, 140:12, 339:17, 341:3, 382:18, 384:1, 384:9</p> <p>tone [2] - 124:20, 328:11</p> <p>tonight [4] - 141:13, 294:6, 383:8, 383:23</p> <p>took [5] - 136:18, 178:19, 206:9, 206:24, 341:15</p> <p>tool [3] - 211:7, 220:10, 220:14</p> <p>top [11] - 51:3, 68:2, 68:7, 68:14, 68:19, 107:15, 186:3, 205:2, 274:12, 294:25</p> <p>top-level [1] - 205:2</p> <p>topics [1] - 267:13</p> <p>total [72] - 13:15, 35:24, 53:18, 53:24, 66:4, 88:16, 106:6, 111:8, 112:16, 131:10, 132:6, 133:21, 142:6, 142:11, 142:12, 142:13, 145:10, 145:11,</p>	<p>193:7, 195:5, 210:18, 210:23, 214:24, 217:24, 217:25, 222:18, 223:10, 223:17, 224:5, 224:6, 225:9, 225:13, 225:22, 225:23, 225:25, 227:13, 236:8, 243:13, 243:17, 244:1, 244:3, 244:6, 244:12, 244:19, 244:21, 248:3, 263:19, 268:14, 268:24, 272:1, 272:12, 272:15, 273:23, 281:5, 281:12, 292:25, 295:13, 300:10, 304:24, 315:11, 315:12, 325:7, 325:9, 327:14, 327:16, 331:10, 334:17, 356:24, 357:19, 358:17, 358:22, 358:24</p> <p>totality [2] - 75:5, 82:15</p> <p>touch [1] - 253:15</p> <p>touched [2] - 356:17, 378:12</p> <p>tough [1] - 22:22</p> <p>tougher [1] - 203:24</p> <p>tour [3] - 115:24, 197:11, 204:14</p> <p>toured [1] - 200:25</p> <p>toward [1] - 274:18</p> <p>towards [12] - 83:6, 121:12, 125:10, 161:11, 220:13, 258:14, 260:22, 281:1, 337:21, 364:11, 366:20, 378:19</p> <p>town [1] - 168:6</p> <p>track [6] - 21:9, 96:17, 116:25, 117:2, 162:11, 275:25</p> <p>tracking [2] - 252:24, 365:13</p> <p>trade [7] - 21:18, 21:22, 120:12, 174:2, 195:11, 195:21, 283:19</p> <p>tradeoff [1] - 217:2</p> <p>trading [2] - 283:20, 286:17</p> <p>traditional [1] - 124:11</p> <p>trained [2] - 185:6, 194:14</p> <p>training [11] - 194:2, 194:4, 194:5, 194:6, 194:8, 194:21, 194:24, 207:6, 218:6, 218:13, 238:10</p> <p>transcribing [1] - 27:14</p> <p>TRANSCRIPT [1] - 1:11</p> <p>transfer [1] - 222:15</p> <p>transferring [1] - 93:21</p> <p>transmission [83] - 29:6, 31:23, 40:23, 41:20, 46:11, 46:24, 47:10, 47:11, 57:16, 57:18, 57:22, 58:4, 58:13, 71:16, 71:18, 71:21, 72:6, 81:11, 81:16, 82:14, 102:19, 102:21, 103:25, 104:2, 105:2, 108:5,</p>
---	--	--	---

<p>108:20, 112:14, 113:10, 116:15, 120:17, 123:17, 142:7, 142:13, 150:20, 151:8, 156:22, 165:10, 165:12, 167:2, 171:20, 171:24, 268:12, 269:14, 269:21, 272:10, 273:3, 273:15, 273:16, 274:3, 293:4, 308:6, 308:15, 310:4, 310:6, 310:12, 312:2, 312:3, 314:9, 318:14, 319:13, 349:8, 351:17, 351:19, 352:5, 363:5, 363:8, 363:19, 364:4, 364:18, 364:21, 364:24, 364:25, 365:3, 365:5, 365:17, 365:18, 365:23, 366:3, 373:20, 373:23</p> <p>transport [1] - 276:19</p> <p>transportation [1] - 278:1</p> <p>Treasury [2] - 11:12, 12:20</p> <p>treated [2] - 259:12, 319:12</p> <p>treatment [5] - 29:19, 32:10, 33:15, 89:14, 171:17</p> <p>trend [4] - 274:18, 276:13, 280:25, 364:11</p> <p>trending [1] - 246:22</p> <p>trends [2] - 275:5</p> <p>tried [2] - 122:22, 374:8</p> <p>tries [1] - 317:22</p> <p>trigger [1] - 259:2</p> <p>triggered [1] - 221:25</p> <p>triple [1] - 131:18</p> <p>tripled [1] - 131:17</p> <p>trouble [2] - 344:1, 344:3</p> <p>truck [1] - 278:3</p> <p>trucks [1] - 114:25</p> <p>true [13] - 75:13, 92:19, 104:24, 117:18, 146:5, 189:25, 196:19, 202:15, 203:21, 270:4, 291:13, 322:21, 354:3</p> <p>truly [1] - 61:7</p> <p>truth [5] - 155:13, 172:24, 209:1, 266:12, 322:6</p> <p>try [31] - 20:25, 25:1, 28:4, 49:18, 49:20, 60:19, 69:7, 90:1, 90:18, 94:3, 100:20, 110:18, 113:17, 113:23, 122:22, 122:24, 132:6, 133:12, 162:25, 178:7, 186:19, 195:12, 196:11, 207:8, 265:13, 277:4, 323:12, 328:18, 339:18, 341:7, 358:2</p> <p>trying [35] - 19:19, 27:3, 49:12, 51:12, 69:16, 97:11, 98:6, 116:9, 120:4, 122:7, 122:8, 146:6, 151:3, 230:1,</p>	<p>237:13, 237:15, 251:10, 251:22, 253:23, 254:11, 262:20, 278:18, 316:11, 317:8, 324:12, 328:22, 345:5, 348:20, 349:16, 355:2, 357:11, 365:10, 368:25, 382:23</p> <p>Tuesday [1] - 15:2</p> <p>turbine [6] - 61:7, 61:11, 61:13, 62:9, 157:17, 158:4</p> <p>turn [13] - 61:25, 76:7, 100:12, 106:17, 107:14, 196:19, 242:5, 272:18, 288:11, 290:3, 307:6, 315:24, 348:12</p> <p>turned [2] - 21:4, 21:7</p> <p>turnover [3] - 182:18, 191:13, 213:8</p> <p>twice [1] - 303:16</p> <p>two [75] - 18:21, 26:22, 41:14, 59:8, 60:5, 66:11, 70:11, 70:12, 71:22, 86:19, 90:6, 90:8, 90:9, 90:15, 90:21, 91:3, 91:8, 99:8, 103:2, 104:3, 105:1, 107:2, 112:13, 136:18, 141:5, 142:8, 145:5, 146:15, 147:2, 157:20, 159:22, 160:6, 160:7, 160:12, 160:13, 160:19, 162:1, 163:24, 185:10, 194:18, 195:18, 217:3, 220:23, 223:17, 226:9, 264:13, 265:15, 265:16, 267:12, 268:25, 274:11, 280:17, 292:9, 295:14, 297:18, 302:25, 303:9, 313:18, 314:24, 321:16, 323:8, 342:10, 343:21, 348:7, 352:8, 358:12, 361:10, 366:22, 367:1, 372:8, 372:18, 374:17, 380:9</p> <p>Two [1] - 262:3</p> <p>two-and-a-half-year [1] - 185:10</p> <p>two-sided [1] - 145:5</p> <p>two-thirds [1] - 358:12</p> <p>two-year [2] - 163:24, 195:18</p> <p>twofold [2] - 178:8, 178:20</p> <p>tying [1] - 237:8</p> <p>type [20] - 51:18, 55:11, 55:14, 55:15, 65:15, 114:19, 116:22, 135:13, 138:19, 160:11, 183:16, 192:2, 198:8, 199:2, 229:19, 239:6, 255:1, 289:3, 289:18, 293:23</p> <p>types [13] - 58:18, 133:19, 183:25, 184:23, 185:8, 195:22, 196:22, 201:9,</p>	<p>207:3, 207:7, 233:24, 241:25, 269:10</p> <p>typical [5] - 111:13, 131:25, 333:5, 333:7, 333:8</p> <p>typically [5] - 55:16, 162:7, 162:10, 164:12, 167:20</p> <p>TYSON [1] - 6:15</p> <p style="text-align: center;">U</p> <p>U.S [7] - 190:2, 205:16, 206:8, 206:16, 206:22, 207:1, 207:16</p> <p>ultimately [7] - 82:5, 85:3, 101:23, 127:14, 135:18, 225:19, 311:8</p> <p>umbrella [1] - 220:7</p> <p>unbilled [1] - 13:17</p> <p>unclear [1] - 322:14</p> <p>uncommon [1] - 120:1</p> <p>under [48] - 27:13, 37:13, 59:20, 91:6, 107:12, 120:10, 142:10, 155:13, 172:24, 176:5, 176:6, 209:1, 215:21, 220:6, 231:5, 231:9, 231:18, 231:20, 232:12, 232:14, 232:16, 232:24, 235:6, 266:3, 266:12, 280:5, 280:19, 283:10, 285:9, 291:15, 300:11, 311:5, 311:16, 325:15, 327:20, 329:8, 334:21, 343:4, 367:18, 371:15, 372:2, 374:3, 374:5, 374:6, 374:13, 374:19, 375:1, 381:13</p> <p>underground [1] - 162:8</p> <p>underlying [1] - 287:2</p> <p>understandable [2] - 30:10, 343:8</p> <p>understood [4] - 94:20, 96:18, 220:18, 383:6</p> <p>undertake [1] - 53:8</p> <p>undertaken [1] - 178:8</p> <p>unequivocally [1] - 323:9</p> <p>uniformly [2] - 318:22, 318:24</p> <p>union [2] - 51:11, 113:19</p> <p>unique [2] - 201:2, 213:10</p> <p>unit [27] - 55:11, 60:25, 61:7, 61:11, 61:13, 61:18, 61:21, 61:24, 63:15, 82:10, 161:20, 162:5, 162:10, 177:17, 191:10, 215:18, 216:5, 234:7, 235:1, 303:5, 303:6, 315:4, 354:13, 354:15, 354:17, 354:23, 367:2</p>	<p>Unit [4] - 157:14, 177:16, 177:18, 191:24</p> <p>United [2] - 187:14, 199:9</p> <p>units [18] - 57:3, 57:5, 57:8, 60:24, 61:5, 76:9, 76:14, 76:19, 165:1, 174:19, 174:20, 192:1, 221:22, 303:5, 314:25, 315:2, 335:7, 337:8</p> <p>universities [3] - 186:4, 195:12, 195:16</p> <p>unless [8] - 210:17, 270:8, 300:18, 338:23, 355:22, 358:24, 359:1, 359:3</p> <p>unlike [1] - 300:13</p> <p>unlikely [1] - 31:2</p> <p>unprecedented [1] - 35:10</p> <p>unreasonable [1] - 31:10</p> <p>unstable [2] - 323:5, 323:8</p> <p>unsupported [3] - 29:23, 32:15, 35:22</p> <p>untoward [1] - 278:11</p> <p>unusual [1] - 326:23</p> <p>UP [1] - 376:11</p> <p>up [134] - 19:20, 20:16, 21:7, 21:18, 21:23, 25:4, 28:7, 46:18, 49:23, 51:3, 58:3, 61:9, 61:25, 62:3, 62:6, 62:16, 73:25, 78:5, 82:11, 84:9, 89:11, 89:16, 89:20, 89:21, 103:15, 106:21, 106:24, 112:8, 119:5, 119:16, 119:20, 120:1, 123:16, 123:23, 126:14, 126:24, 127:20, 128:18, 129:18, 129:25, 136:6, 136:8, 136:9, 136:10, 136:12, 137:4, 137:11, 140:7, 141:19, 142:22, 147:1, 151:24, 152:5, 153:18, 154:11, 164:4, 165:7, 168:8, 168:14, 170:10, 173:18, 179:13, 180:20, 184:8, 184:19, 185:24, 194:8, 196:6, 197:10, 200:19, 203:6, 203:12, 204:5, 207:23, 208:3, 224:21, 228:22, 230:25, 233:4, 235:12, 235:13, 235:19, 238:20, 240:11, 242:25, 243:9, 245:8, 245:10, 245:24, 246:11, 252:18, 254:14, 258:18, 259:16, 265:25, 266:15, 272:3, 273:16, 276:12, 277:18, 286:3, 290:1, 292:9, 293:3, 294:22, 295:10, 296:8, 297:18, 298:4, 301:23, 302:6, 317:8, 320:10,</p>
--	--	---	---

<p>327:24, 328:5, 333:11, 340:12, 343:13, 344:7, 346:17, 350:18, 356:25, 358:8, 361:4, 361:14, 361:21, 361:23, 365:1, 366:22, 367:15, 370:8, 379:6, 379:8</p> <p>update [1] - 168:17</p> <p>updated [1] - 40:15</p> <p>Updated [1] - 13:17</p> <p>updating [2] - 96:2, 165:4</p> <p>upfront [1] - 222:6</p> <p>upgrade [3] - 177:24, 177:25, 201:16</p> <p>upgrades [5] - 126:10, 164:14, 175:7, 201:13, 201:14</p> <p>uprate [5] - 40:22, 54:10, 55:6, 175:4, 178:3</p> <p>uprate/life [1] - 175:1</p> <p>uprates [3] - 54:3, 54:7, 105:2</p> <p>ups [1] - 121:18</p> <p>upshot [1] - 321:18</p> <p>URD [1] - 12:6</p> <p>USA [1] - 176:1</p> <p>usable [1] - 230:19</p> <p>usage [7] - 56:6, 76:23, 185:21, 310:14, 310:16, 310:18, 368:24</p> <p>useful [8] - 23:17, 23:20, 23:23, 24:3, 98:11, 98:12, 345:12, 345:17</p> <p>uses [11] - 35:2, 35:4, 35:15, 270:22, 270:23, 310:11, 333:10, 333:16, 335:16, 337:7, 378:3</p> <p>utilities [20] - 17:7, 36:6, 56:9, 69:5, 86:2, 99:15, 120:21, 123:21, 198:12, 211:3, 211:8, 213:3, 254:24, 255:17, 316:4, 318:25, 330:2, 377:19, 378:1</p> <p>Utilities [3] - 251:12, 251:13, 345:15</p> <p>Utility [6] - 13:14, 153:1, 153:2, 153:5, 153:8, 203:11</p> <p>utility [34] - 15:11, 67:5, 69:1, 75:23, 123:12, 152:17, 188:8, 210:15, 214:25, 215:2, 218:23, 240:25, 255:11, 255:16, 255:23, 267:11, 270:10, 270:12, 320:13, 325:12, 331:1, 333:8, 333:14, 334:13, 345:8, 345:9, 355:20, 356:7, 357:19, 359:5, 362:2, 366:16, 371:17,</p>	<p>379:4</p> <p>utility's [1] - 311:20</p> <p>utilize [3] - 160:5, 210:22, 215:10</p> <p>utilizes [1] - 163:23</p> <p>utilizing [1] - 213:1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">V</p> <p>vacancies [1] - 253:14</p> <p>vacancy [1] - 253:8</p> <p>valid [2] - 313:23, 314:20</p> <p>validate [1] - 180:7</p> <p>VALLEY [46] - 2:6, 16:12, 16:21, 26:7, 27:22, 27:25, 28:14, 36:9, 37:5, 37:7, 37:24, 38:20, 39:2, 45:7, 65:20, 67:20, 87:19, 93:12, 139:21, 141:15, 141:18, 144:16, 145:17, 154:16, 155:4, 156:9, 159:6, 170:4, 171:8, 172:14, 173:17, 177:1, 207:21, 208:7, 208:16, 209:18, 213:11, 226:22, 227:2, 227:19, 228:9, 231:25, 233:2, 253:1, 257:1, 264:3</p> <p>valley [9] - 25:12, 37:4, 38:19, 65:19, 67:19, 73:19, 87:17, 139:19, 140:14</p> <p>Valley [42] - 3:5, 3:8, 3:11, 3:16, 4:3, 5:12, 5:15, 6:3, 6:6, 8:3, 8:6, 8:9, 16:11, 16:13, 16:16, 28:10, 28:16, 36:8, 41:24, 90:19, 141:8, 145:16, 154:14, 155:2, 155:22, 159:8, 171:7, 172:12, 173:12, 207:19, 208:14, 209:13, 213:13, 226:20, 227:12, 228:7, 231:22, 233:1, 256:25, 264:17, 297:23, 314:25</p> <p>valley's [1] - 73:10</p> <p>valuation [1] - 59:24</p> <p>Value [1] - 12:12</p> <p>value [21] - 23:16, 57:14, 58:15, 97:24, 98:1, 102:16, 110:7, 121:19, 135:8, 167:23, 211:23, 277:3, 278:19, 281:1, 284:3, 284:16, 298:9, 298:25, 367:18, 374:18, 374:20</p> <p>valued [1] - 302:9</p> <p>values [3] - 334:15, 374:9, 374:12</p> <p>variability [3] - 110:16, 311:7, 375:1</p> <p>variable [8] - 135:25, 219:24, 220:2, 239:9, 246:13,</p>	<p>258:20, 259:5, 337:5</p> <p>variation [2] - 353:3, 353:21</p> <p>variations [1] - 333:16</p> <p>varied [1] - 214:16</p> <p>varies [3] - 278:5, 328:4, 374:14</p> <p>variety [7] - 67:6, 118:14, 121:14, 206:9, 212:7, 221:14, 227:24</p> <p>various [12] - 56:14, 185:8, 195:22, 198:7, 201:9, 204:17, 310:5, 318:7, 320:11, 329:5, 336:20, 370:6</p> <p>vary [5] - 244:24, 327:1, 327:3, 327:4, 375:15</p> <p>varying [1] - 373:14</p> <p>vault [1] - 345:22</p> <p>vending [1] - 116:21</p> <p>verbal [2] - 27:23, 28:3</p> <p>verbatim [2] - 334:20, 340:20</p> <p>verbiage [1] - 339:12</p> <p>verify [3] - 170:20, 170:21, 339:12</p> <p>versa [1] - 368:4</p> <p>version [4] - 90:13, 91:18, 160:12, 328:23</p> <p>versions [1] - 173:21</p> <p>versus [18] - 78:16, 166:2, 166:9, 194:24, 219:25, 238:4, 238:11, 238:17, 238:19, 239:9, 239:10, 239:25, 244:18, 250:24, 351:15, 357:7, 359:9</p> <p>vetted [1] - 82:24</p> <p>via [1] - 75:19</p> <p>vice [3] - 16:23, 40:8, 368:4</p> <p>Vice [1] - 174:12</p> <p>Vice-President [1] - 174:12</p> <p>view [9] - 18:22, 82:15, 98:13, 101:19, 120:20, 120:23, 198:12, 254:15, 364:22</p> <p>viewpoint [1] - 197:20</p> <p>viewpoints [5] - 20:14, 20:24, 120:19, 124:4, 152:24</p> <p>views [2] - 21:13, 147:23</p> <p>vigilance [1] - 186:23</p> <p>vigor [1] - 370:6</p> <p>Vikings [1] - 22:6</p> <p>violate [1] - 170:18</p> <p>violation [3] - 124:9, 147:8, 170:12</p> <p>virtue [1] - 49:3</p> <p>visions [1] - 361:24</p> <p>vitality [2] - 76:6, 76:21</p> <p>vivid [1] - 204:18</p> <p>volatile [2] - 189:6, 189:10</p> <p>voltage [8] - 47:9, 58:12,</p>	<p>71:25, 72:6, 102:21, 102:25, 104:2, 167:20</p> <p>VOLUME [1] - 1:13</p> <p>volumes [1] - 22:18</p> <p>VP [2] - 119:22, 120:17</p> <p>VPs [1] - 119:10</p> <p>vs [1] - 12:20</p> <p style="text-align: center;">W</p> <p>wait [1] - 303:2</p> <p>waiting [3] - 115:7, 175:3, 303:6</p> <p>wake [1] - 99:13</p> <p>walk [4] - 138:23, 139:10, 283:13, 373:16</p> <p>walked [1] - 173:18</p> <p>walking [1] - 282:25</p> <p>wants [2] - 371:14, 371:15</p> <p>warranted [1] - 356:14</p> <p>waste [3] - 275:23, 289:1, 289:3</p> <p>watch [2] - 183:15, 249:1</p> <p>watched [3] - 183:14, 183:15</p> <p>watching [1] - 296:5</p> <p>water [4] - 202:19, 206:18, 229:25, 280:22</p> <p>waters [1] - 93:21</p> <p>wave [1] - 187:3</p> <p>ways [8] - 41:12, 53:25, 58:23, 184:16, 186:9, 196:4, 237:24, 276:13</p> <p>wearing [1] - 167:10</p> <p>weather [4] - 131:23, 131:25, 144:10, 144:11</p> <p>Web [3] - 145:3, 253:7, 253:18</p> <p>website [1] - 12:9</p> <p>week [2] - 24:13, 250:5</p> <p>weeks [1] - 179:22</p> <p>Wefald [1] - 362:24</p> <p>Wefald's [1] - 362:25</p> <p>weighing [1] - 198:25</p> <p>weight [2] - 309:25, 346:25</p> <p>weighted [5] - 31:11, 234:13, 308:25, 346:7, 346:10</p> <p>weighting [7] - 310:15, 310:18, 346:6, 346:12, 346:21, 346:24, 347:20</p> <p>weights [2] - 346:4, 346:5</p> <p>welcome [6] - 100:1, 249:19, 285:16, 344:8, 377:12, 382:1</p> <p>welders [1] - 195:21</p> <p>welfare [3] - 225:18, 227:16, 243:21</p> <p>well-defined [2] - 103:20, 104:9</p> <p>well-established [1] - 36:21</p>
---	---	---	---

<p>well-priced ^[1] - 47:6 well-run ^[1] - 133:10 Wells ^[1] - 2:11 western ^[1] - 364:1 whereas ^[1] - 379:15 white ^[1] - 145:7 whole ^[24] - 19:11, 79:1, 85:25, 96:5, 105:5, 114:2, 137:12, 137:21, 138:3, 166:2, 166:10, 188:10, 188:22, 191:16, 201:7, 216:1, 244:18, 295:4, 320:8, 329:24, 345:16, 348:17, 352:17, 363:12 wide ^[3] - 175:24, 333:19, 365:4 widely ^[2] - 313:19, 313:21 wildly ^[1] - 352:21 willing ^[4] - 43:17, 117:23, 168:11, 229:9 willingness ^[1] - 118:11 win ^[1] - 122:20 wind ^[48] - 43:23, 56:12, 57:6, 57:8, 57:10, 57:18, 57:19, 57:23, 58:5, 58:7, 90:6, 90:7, 90:15, 107:10, 107:17, 107:18, 107:20, 107:23, 107:24, 110:10, 110:16, 110:21, 111:16, 111:22, 111:23, 112:3, 135:23, 136:2, 137:3, 137:4, 137:11, 137:15, 137:24, 138:5, 138:8, 138:9, 138:14, 139:2, 289:13, 292:11, 292:13, 292:23, 293:10, 293:15, 293:23, 294:22, 295:4 Winds ^[3] - 90:17, 93:20, 94:1 Wing ^[1] - 300:22 winter ^[10] - 15:17, 310:10, 335:8, 352:11, 379:2, 379:14, 379:16, 379:18, 382:23, 382:24 wire ^[1] - 278:22 wires ^[4] - 269:22, 269:23, 290:16, 290:17 Wisconsin ^[29] - 35:22, 52:21, 58:14, 73:15, 74:4, 74:6, 74:11, 74:14, 74:20, 74:23, 75:6, 142:24, 143:1, 148:21, 166:3, 166:9, 194:13, 219:2, 219:4, 219:7, 219:17, 219:18, 231:4, 231:20, 232:3, 233:11, 233:13, 376:7 wise ^[1] - 191:4 wish ^[2] - 40:1, 306:18 Wishart ^[7] - 10:8, 10:9, 10:11, 11:6, 110:21,</p>	<p>138:22, 139:10 WISHART ^[1] - 5:11 Witness ^[3] - 38:5, 166:4, 307:2 witness ^[70] - 17:19, 24:19, 24:20, 25:10, 32:6, 34:16, 35:23, 37:12, 37:23, 37:25, 39:13, 42:8, 45:8, 48:20, 64:23, 67:1, 73:7, 73:24, 74:17, 74:19, 74:22, 83:21, 86:14, 87:18, 113:3, 115:21, 126:6, 128:11, 128:13, 138:22, 140:13, 141:8, 144:24, 149:23, 155:3, 155:5, 155:17, 159:6, 159:16, 167:2, 171:16, 172:7, 172:13, 172:15, 173:3, 177:2, 181:20, 188:19, 208:5, 209:5, 232:19, 232:21, 232:23, 253:2, 261:16, 264:24, 265:2, 266:2, 281:23, 306:15, 306:19, 307:4, 313:14, 331:5, 341:6, 341:8, 341:24, 379:21, 379:23 WITNESS ^[54] - 47:24, 87:3, 92:5, 92:14, 92:25, 100:9, 134:9, 139:16, 154:25, 155:9, 155:15, 155:19, 169:21, 169:23, 172:10, 172:20, 173:1, 181:18, 184:14, 208:4, 208:22, 209:3, 227:9, 231:22, 249:19, 256:8, 263:25, 265:24, 266:14, 266:17, 290:2, 290:6, 291:19, 294:17, 297:9, 305:16, 306:23, 321:5, 326:22, 331:21, 333:13, 339:2, 342:7, 342:9, 344:8, 350:20, 370:9, 370:11, 370:14, 370:19, 370:21, 370:24, 382:1, 383:20 witness's ^[1] - 341:7 WITNESSES ^[2] - 3:3, 6:19 witnesses ^[29] - 16:24, 17:10, 17:20, 17:21, 20:15, 24:20, 25:10, 26:8, 26:13, 26:17, 28:20, 28:22, 37:4, 37:10, 37:15, 45:19, 66:25, 72:9, 100:22, 111:10, 119:13, 126:9, 140:6, 140:11, 140:12, 140:16, 165:24, 188:20, 384:11 wonder ^[3] - 117:10, 117:13, 261:9 wondering ^[5] - 58:6, 79:16, 320:20, 336:6, 339:4 wonders ^[1] - 180:19</p>	<p>word ^[3] - 148:18, 314:12, 329:23 worded ^[1] - 339:5 words ^[3] - 105:12, 198:13, 284:2 workers ^[5] - 176:12, 176:14, 182:4, 186:13, 276:19 workforce ^[9] - 176:18, 182:18, 186:15, 186:19, 191:11, 191:12, 216:16, 220:12 Workpapers ^[1] - 9:10 works ^[3] - 72:2, 116:24, 139:11 world ^[3] - 98:18, 175:23, 364:8 worldwide ^[1] - 175:25 worse ^[2] - 49:25, 206:6 worst ^[3] - 204:19, 206:10, 206:13 worst-case ^[3] - 204:19, 206:10, 206:13 worth ^[2] - 98:3, 240:8 wrap ^[2] - 84:9, 168:8 write ^[3] - 134:20, 230:25, 324:7 writing ^[1] - 190:16 written ^[6] - 26:9, 190:19, 209:19, 209:22, 265:14, 279:10 wrote ^[1] - 339:15</p> <p style="text-align: center;">X</p> <p>Xcel ^[50] - 2:7, 12:6, 16:14, 16:19, 21:4, 52:2, 52:4, 52:18, 52:24, 67:4, 71:11, 71:12, 77:7, 99:15, 120:5, 122:13, 124:9, 124:22, 126:13, 128:4, 128:18, 146:2, 146:19, 147:23, 151:1, 151:2, 152:10, 152:15, 153:1, 166:2, 166:9, 174:13, 194:5, 210:2, 213:19, 213:23, 214:8, 229:9, 250:11, 250:14, 251:1, 251:16, 267:10, 279:14, 281:12, 292:22, 308:1, 319:11, 319:14 Xcel's ^[2] - 152:11, 152:24</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Y</p> <p>year ^[158] - 15:12, 31:22, 31:24, 34:20, 34:21, 35:2, 35:4, 35:6, 35:14, 45:23, 46:2, 46:3, 51:25, 52:1, 52:4, 55:17, 67:3, 78:20,</p>	<p>78:25, 79:5, 79:19, 80:1, 81:7, 81:8, 81:9, 82:17, 82:18, 82:19, 82:20, 82:21, 82:23, 83:6, 83:12, 83:14, 88:11, 88:22, 98:21, 99:10, 99:11, 103:23, 106:8, 106:9, 106:20, 110:23, 111:2, 111:13, 127:10, 127:16, 131:13, 131:23, 131:24, 132:1, 143:18, 143:19, 151:6, 151:10, 151:13, 158:23, 163:15, 163:24, 164:15, 177:19, 185:10, 193:8, 193:9, 193:13, 194:25, 195:1, 195:18, 196:1, 211:12, 213:21, 214:13, 216:3, 216:7, 216:11, 216:12, 217:7, 217:9, 219:22, 220:21, 221:25, 222:15, 224:14, 234:17, 236:24, 237:22, 238:8, 239:17, 239:22, 240:12, 241:7, 242:12, 246:20, 248:10, 248:24, 249:4, 249:5, 259:3, 259:6, 259:21, 260:17, 271:1, 271:5, 285:3, 286:5, 286:14, 298:25, 300:14, 308:11, 309:12, 311:3, 311:4, 311:8, 311:24, 315:10, 315:16, 316:12, 316:14, 316:18, 316:21, 316:23, 324:15, 324:22, 324:24, 343:18, 349:10, 352:9, 352:21, 353:3, 353:10, 353:19, 353:25, 354:21, 355:9, 355:10, 368:16, 368:25, 369:6, 375:7, 375:13, 377:2, 377:8, 377:9, 378:21 Year ^[2] - 12:20, 13:14 year's ^[1] - 286:6 year-by-year ^[2] - 82:20, 98:21 year-end ^[1] - 216:12 year-over-year ^[1] - 111:13 year-to-year ^[1] - 311:4 yearly ^[2] - 226:3, 317:14 Years ^[1] - 11:12 years ^[87] - 20:18, 29:12, 34:25, 37:20, 42:6, 43:9, 46:9, 46:14, 46:16, 47:5, 57:21, 68:16, 70:12, 81:3, 81:5, 88:18, 88:20, 95:6, 95:13, 96:5, 97:10, 97:11, 97:18, 99:8, 99:13, 99:19, 99:22, 102:15, 103:4, 108:22, 111:14, 114:4, 120:6, 120:7, 120:20,</p>
---	---	--	---

121:2, 121:24, 123:21,
124:22, 128:18, 130:5,
130:11, 130:15, 131:2,
131:4, 131:8, 131:22,
133:18, 133:19, 134:3,
134:24, 136:15, 157:22,
160:7, 160:12, 160:13,
160:19, 164:6, 178:10,
183:22, 186:17, 190:24,
195:16, 196:20, 198:5,
198:10, 198:13, 198:15,
202:21, 206:16, 213:25,
224:8, 248:11, 248:14,
266:8, 267:11, 275:6,
281:5, 295:16, 301:23,
303:2, 309:6, 312:6,
363:15, 370:4, 379:15
yesterday [1] - 21:19
Yield [1] - 11:12
yields [2] - 310:25, 312:9
York [1] - 13:13
yourself [2] - 72:9, 255:18
Yucca [3] - 199:23, 200:5,
200:12

Z

zero [8] - 26:18, 68:14,
277:14, 299:16, 299:20,
299:22, 299:25, 301:19